

Graduate School of Education

University of Exeter

Investigating the Perceptions of EAP Teachers about Curriculum Challenges in
Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman

Submitted by

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*to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education*

In November 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking Almighty Allah for giving me the blessings to successfully complete my thesis.

I want to express my sincere thanks to my great mother for her prayers and blessings. She was the driver of my motivation during my PhD study.

I am so grateful to all the people I have met in Exeter. I have not only gained knowledge but I have gained true friends who provided me with their love, continuous help and support. I would like to mention Khadijah Al Balushi who was always beside me and she never stopped offering her support until the last moment.

I also want to express my profound gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Salah Troudi and Dr Esmaeel Abdollahzadeh who guided me from the initial stages until the completion of my thesis. I appreciate their valuable suggestions and their constructive comments.

Nadiya Sulaiman Al Issaei

ABSTRACT

The area of curriculum development in courses of English for Academic Purposes has received considerable attention in the curriculum literature at international level. This has been reflected through the proliferation of studies and publications which were aimed at targeting various issues of EAP curriculum development. However, in the Omani higher education context, there has been a scarcity of local research studies that have approached curriculum issues in EAP courses. The current study is aimed at investigating the perceptions of EAP teachers about existing curriculum challenges in Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman and to further explore the nature of these challenges in minimizing the effectiveness of teaching and learning of EAP courses at the colleges. The study is informed by the interpretive constructivist paradigm. It is based on a case study methodology utilizing the merits of mixed methods research. The initial phase of data collection was quantitative and it started with distributing an on-line questionnaire to all EAP teachers across the six CAS colleges. The subsequent qualitative phase was based on conducting semi-structured interviews with 20 EAP teachers from two CAS colleges and it was intended to provide a deep investigation about EAP curriculum challenges as perceived by the EAP teachers who participated in the study. The findings indicated that the centralized top-down approach under which EAP courses are provided at CAS has been a major challenge to the development of the curriculum. It was also revealed that the role of EAP teachers has been limited to the implementation of their teaching duties and that they weren't allowed to contribute actively in other curriculum elements. The findings highlight that curriculum development and teacher professional development are interrelated which means that focusing on the area of professional development needs more attention as indicated in the findings. The findings also allude to the significance of

encouraging collaborative efforts among EAP teachers and subject area teachers at the colleges to make the EAP courses constructively aligned with the students' academic specializations.

Table of Contents

Content	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
ABSTRACT	3
LIST OF CONTENTS	4
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	10
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	11
 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	 12
1.1 INTRODUCTION	12
1.2 Curriculum Development at Colleges of Applies Sciences	12
1.3 Rationale of the study	13
1.4 Research Questions	16
1.5 Significance of the Research	17
1.6 Structure of the Study	18
 CHAPTER TWO: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT	 20
2.1 Introduction	20

2.2 The Status of English in Higher Education in Oman	23
2.3 English Language Teaching at Higher Education Institutions	23
2.4 English Language Teaching at Colleges of Applied Sciences	26
2.5 English for Academic Purposes at Colleges of Applied Sciences	29
2.6 EAP Programme Curriculum Structure	32
2.6.1 Resources	33
2.6.2 Pedagogical Methods	33
2.6.3 Teaching Staff	34
2.6.4 EAP Continuous Assessment and Final Assessment	35
2.6.5 Curriculum Development and Professional Development at CAS	36
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW	40
3.1 Introduction	40
3.2 Towards the Reconceptualization of Curriculum	41
3.3 Tyler's Fundamental Interpretation of Curriculum	44
3.4 Recent Perspectives about Curriculum	46
3.5 Curriculum Ideologies and Philosophical Orientations	49
3.6 The Three Major Ideologies of the Study	54

3.6.1 Technical Behavioral Ideology (Social and Economic Efficiency)	55
3.6.2 Learner-Centeredness Ideology	56
3.6.3 Critical-Political Ideology	59
3.8 Curriculum Development in ELT	61
3.9 Models of Curriculum Development in ELT	61
3.9.1 Brown's Model of Curriculum Development	62
3.9.2 Richard's Model of Curriculum Development	62
3.9.3 A Model by nation and McAllister	63
3.9.4 Reflecting on the Presented Models of Curriculum Development	65
3.9.5 Multi-Model Approach to Curriculum Development	68
3.9.6 Role of Teachers in Curriculum Development	68
3.10 English for Academic Purposes	72
3.10.1 EAP or ESP	73
3.10.2 Understanding Major Issues in EAP	75
3.11 Curriculum Development in EAP	79
3.12 Curriculum Development and Professional Development	86
Summary	89
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY	90

4.1 Introduction	90
4.2 The Philosophical Approach Underpinning the Study	90
4.2.1 The Interpretive Research Paradigm	92
4.3 Mixed-Methods Research	95
4.4 Case Study Methodology	96
4.5 Participants and Sampling Procedures	101
4.6 Access and Acceptance	103
4.7 Data Collection	104
4.7.1 The Questionnaire	105
4.7.2 Semi-Structured Interviews	107
4.8 Data Analysis and Representation	112
4.9 Social Construction of validity in Qualitative Research	117
4.10 Ethical Considerations	119
4.11 Limitations of the Study	121
Summary	121
 CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS	 123
5.1 Introduction	123
5.2 Analyzing the Questionnaire	123
5.2 EAP Teachers' Understanding Curriculum	125
5.3 EAP Curriculum Challenges	127

5.3.1 Challenges Related to the Centralized Leadership Approach	127
5.3.1.1 Lack of Teachers' Voice	129
5.3.1.2 Lack of Communications Channels	131
5.3.1.3 Resistance to Change	133
5.3.2 EAP Curriculum Planning Related Issues	135
5.3.2.1 Issues related to assessing the learners' needs	135
5.3.2.2 Issues related to programme goals and objectives	140
5.3.2.3 Issues related to deciding the program content	145
5.3.2.4 Issues related to deciding an assessment plan to assess the students' performance	152
5.3.2.5 The Need for a Programme Evaluation Scheme	161
5.3.3 The Impact of Contextual Factors on CD	164
5.3.3.1 Job Insecurity Among EAP teachers	164
5.3.3.2 Teaching Load	167
5.3.3.3 Lack of Orientation	168
5.3.3.4 Lack of Incentives	170
5.3.3.5 The Need for In-Service Training	171
5.4 EAP Curriculum Development as Perceived by EAP teachers	172
5.4.1 Revisiting the EAP Curriculum	172
5.4.2 Needs Analysis in EAP Programmes at CAS	173

5.4.2.1 Revisiting Current Programmes, Goals and Objectives	174
5.4.2.2 Aligning the EAP programme with Academic Disciplines	175
5.4.2.3 EAP Teachers as Curriculum Developers	177
5.4.3 Fostering Professional Development for an Enriched EAP Curriculum	181
5.4.3.1 Promoting a Culture of Professional Development	182
5.4.3.2 How can PD Promote CD?	184
Summary	188
 CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION	 190
6.1 Introduction	190
6.2 The Global Context of EAP in Higher Education	190
6.3 EAP Planning Related Issues at CAS Colleges	194
6.4 The Issue with Commercially Produced textbooks	197
6.5 The Need for Effective Assessment Tools in EAP Courses	201
6.6 Professional Development of EAP Teachers at CAS	205
6.6.1 Teacher Evaluation at CAS	208
6.6.2 The Need for Structured In-Service Training programmes	211
6.6.3 Utilizing the Potential of the Virtual Environment	213

6.6.4 Professional Treatment of Teachers at CAS	215
6.7 A Model of Curriculum Development in EAP	217
Summary	220
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION	221
7.1 Introduction	221
7.2 Summary of the Main Findings	221
7.3 Implications	223
7.3.1 Implications for Policy Makers	227
7.3.2 Implications for Practice at CAS	227
7.3.2.1 Collaboration between EAP Practitioners and Subject-Teachers	227
7.3.2.2 Teacher-Driven Professional Development	228
7.4 Contribution to Existing Knowledge	230
7.5 Limitations in the Current Study	233
7.6 Recommendations for Further research	234
7.7 Reflecting on the PhD Journey	236
References	238
Appendices	248
Appendix 1: the Questionnaire	248

Appendix 2: the Interview Questions	254
Appendix 3: Ethical Documents	258
Appendix 4: Ministry Letter	
Appendix 5: Analysis of open-ended questions	
Appendix 6: Nvivo Screenshot	
Appendix 7: Official Document	
Appendix 8: Sample of a coded-interview transcript	
Appendix 9: Initial Analysis	
Appendix 10: Descriptive Analysis of Questionnaire items	
Appendix 11: A Sample of a Piloted Questionnaire	
Appendix 12: A Sample of a Piloted interview schedule	

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure	Page
Figure 3.1: A Model of the Parts of the Curriculum Design process	64
Figure 4.1: Representation of the Research Elements	116
Figure 6.1: A Model of the Parts of the Curriculum Design process	218
Figure 7.1: A Proposed Model for EAP Curriculum Development	231

Table	Page
Table 2.1: Levels of the Foundation programme	32
Table 2.2: Courses of English for Academic Purposes	32
Table 4.1: The Process of Analyzing and Coding Interview Transcripts	116
Table 5.1: Themes, Categories and Sub-Categories	124

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAS	Colleges of Applied Sciences
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
GFP	General Foundation Programme
SCL	Student Centered Learning
CD	Curriculum Development
PD	Professional Development

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will present an explicit discussion related to the fundamental elements of this research study. The current chapter will discuss the rational and the significance of this research at both the local and the international level. This chapter will also present the main questions which will guide the investigation of this research.

1.2 Curriculum Challenges at Colleges of Applied Sciences

The Omani higher education system has largely been influenced by the socio-political factors which emerged after the era of globalization. The acquisition of English has been acknowledged as an important and essential element in most of the educational systems around the globe to the extent that it has become 'the most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education, employment, or social positions' (Pennycook, 2001, p.81). The significance associated with English language teaching has been clearly manifested through the continuous and substantial efforts made by the Omani government in diversifying its higher education system to meet the demands and the challenges of higher education, the local market and globalization (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012). In 2005, the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman provided an assessment of the local market which resulted in the conversion of six teacher training colleges into Colleges of Applied Sciences. The six Colleges of Applied Sciences provide degree programmes in Engineering, Information Technology, Design, International Business Administration, and Communication Studies, Applied Biological technology and English Teacher Programme which is only offered in Rustaq

College for Applied Sciences. The English language was chosen as the medium of instruction in these colleges which required the provision of an English language programme which will be referenced throughout this study as (English for Academic Purposes/EAP) to prepare college students for their future professional roles in the job market.

The Omani higher education system was influenced by the Arab Spring which affected various countries in the Middle East and North Africa as well as the Gulf region. The Colleges of Applied Sciences (CAS) witnessed a series of strikes and protests which represented student dissatisfaction with various aspects related to English language teaching at the colleges (Al-Hajri, 2013). A number of demands raised by the CAS students concerned the Foundation Year Programme but others related to assessment and policies implemented at the various English courses taught at the colleges. In light of the socio-political factors of the Omani higher education context, this study will provide an in-depth exploration of curriculum-based issues in EAP courses and will further investigate the role of EAP teachers in curriculum development at the Colleges of Applied Sciences.

The Colleges of Applied Sciences will constitute the context of the study in which further analysis focus on exploring curriculum challenges in EAP courses which are compulsory credit courses students must pass after their completion of the foundation programme. Following the transformation of the Colleges of Education to the current Colleges of Applied Sciences, the English curriculum of the EAP courses was outsourced to the Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) in New Zealand (Ismail, 2011). The curriculum was designed in accordance to an agreement signed with the New Zealand Tertiary Education Consortium NZTEC. With the EAP curriculum components being provided by an external education provider, there was very little input related to the CAS context which would have required an analysis of the needs based stage which is an integral process in the pertinent curriculum literature. This issue was alluded to by Eslami (2010) in his description of EAP in Iran which had a number of similarities to the context of this research. His research suggests that the current EAP practice isn't founded on

systematic grounds 'lacking in course design, teacher training, sufficient instruction time and proper evaluation' (Eslami, 2010, p. 3). The elements of course design, teacher training and proper evaluation will be crucial to the understanding of EAP curriculum issues in the context of the CAS colleges considering the significant interactive role of EAP teachers to ensure the success of the curriculum development process.

The current study is intended to explore the most problematic areas in EAP in general and the challenges which hamper EAP curriculum development at CAS colleges in particular. This study is aimed at providing an in-depth investigation into current issues pertaining to fundamental curriculum elements including EAP syllabus, text books, assessment schemes, and teachers' role in the curriculum as well as evaluation. This research will further analyze the role of the EAP teachers which is being confined to the curriculum implementation without stimulating their creative contributions in the process of curriculum design and evaluation at the colleges. Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012, p.148) stated that the role of teachers has been highly acknowledged in the World Bank development report 2008 which positioned lecturers at the center of the educational system. The report stated that in the educational settings, teachers are expected to 'continuously evaluate their learners' learning needs and adopt appropriate methods accordingly' rather than limiting their teaching capabilities to the implementation of the curriculum (ibid). There is an apparent deficit in the process of EAP curriculum development at the Colleges of Applied Sciences apart from the annual meetings held by the English programme directors with the level coordinators of the six colleges. These meetings have not provided any substantial nor practical solutions to the existing curriculum challenges in EAP courses. This study is also aimed at highlighting the direct interconnectedness between initiating a process of curriculum development and the need for teachers' professional development especially since teachers represent the main stakeholders in this particular context.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

EAP expatriate and Omani EAP teachers have continuously voiced their concerns regarding the evaluation of the EAP courses at the Colleges of Applied Science. As a level coordinator, my experience was primarily with students during their first academic year at the College of Sohar for Applied Sciences, along with their respective teachers. As a coordinator, follow-up meetings with EAP teachers were arranged and it became evident most of the complaints and comments revolved around certain curriculum components:

- The inadequacy of the textbooks to the students' academic and linguistic needs.
- The need to revise and update the implemented syllabus and assessment schemes.
- The lack of a clear systematic and on-going process to evaluate the EAP programmes at the colleges.
- The lack of professional development opportunities for EAP teachers at the colleges.

In addition to the previously stated issues pertaining to the EAP curriculum, it has been noticed that there is an evident lack of teachers' contributions to curriculum-based research which could be attributed to the rigidity imposed by the top-down approach exercised in our colleges giving rise to expatriate teachers' turnover and lack of motivation among EAP teachers at the colleges. This sense of teachers' detachment from the fundamental aspects of the curriculum can ultimately have serious implications on the process of teaching and learning of EAP in the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman.

There has been an emphasis on investigating various issues pertaining to curriculum design and development in English language teaching to which a number of models have been presented in the literature (Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001; Nation & Macalister, 2010). However, issues of curriculum design and development in the area of teaching English for Academic Purposes has to yet receive adequate attention in the EAP literature and research. Much of the theoretical models discussed in the literature approach curriculum development in

the area of English language teaching as a general topic but they don't provide specific analysis on issues pertaining to the design and development of EAP courses. Therefore, this study can be seen as a significant research exploration into the issues of curriculum development in the domain of teaching English for Academic Purposes which have not received sufficient attention by researchers in the Omani higher education community in which the absence of a model for EAP curriculum development has been evident.

Conducting an investigative study on the EAP curriculum based issues requires a thoughtful consideration of the pertinent theoretical literature and empirical studies focused on EAP curriculum development. This research is expected to contribute to an increased understanding of fundamental issues in EAP curriculum design and development. The study will also examine the current EAP practices at the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman by attaining a better conceptualization to the various existing EAP curriculum challenges confronted by EAP practitioners. This study is also expected to add to the wider knowledge of the socio-political influences which have had an impact on EAP teaching and learning in the higher education context (Charles & Pecorari, 2016).

1.4 Research Questions

For the aim of deeply investigating the problematic areas related to EAP curriculum development at the colleges, a mixed method research approach will be used within the conventions of the methodological orientation of a case study research. In the initial data collection phase, an on-line questionnaire was sent to all the EAP teachers in the six colleges located in Sohar, Rustaq, Sur, Nizwa, Salalah and Ibri. The administered questionnaire is aimed at exploring and identifying general themes and challenges which will be further investigated in follow-up semi structured interviews with EAP teachers. The questionnaire is expected to help the researcher in understanding the nature of the existing curriculum challenges as perceived by EAP teachers. It is also expected to

facilitate the development of focused research questions for the qualitative phase of conducting the semi-structured interviews. The objective of the current study is to unveil the various curriculum challenges encountered by EAP teachers at the colleges stressing the need for a serious initiative of curriculum development to solve the existing issues. The current research will concentrate on providing answers for the following questions:

1. What are the curriculum challenges encountered by EAP teachers at the Colleges of Applied Sciences?
2. How do EAP teachers think that curriculum development can best be achieved?
3. How does curriculum development relate to teacher professional development at CAS colleges?

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research thesis will offer a comprehensive investigation into the curriculum-related challenges which have created continuous teaching obstacles for EAP teachers and influenced the quality of teaching at the Colleges of Applied Sciences. This study is expected to generate valuable information regarding the current curriculum issues in the EAP programme implemented at CAS colleges. The findings of the present study can be utilized by English Programme administrators particularly considering that the study introduces a model for EAP curriculum development. The model presented by the current study provides a thorough investigation of curriculum based issues in the EAP programme in addition to representing a framework to facilitate the process of curriculum development.

El-Okda (2005) argues that curriculum development and teacher professional growth are closely interrelated. The basis of this study is founded on the concept which identifies curriculum development and teachers' professional development as being inseparable. The current study is expected to provide a valuable

investigation about EAP curriculum issues which can help the English programme directors realize the value attributed to teachers' contributions in solving major curriculum problems and improving the instruction of EAP courses at the colleges. This study approaches the area of curriculum development which can be achieved through the establishment of a participatory on-going educational platform engaging administrators, teachers as well as students to maximize the quality of teaching and learning of EAP courses at colleges. In addition, this research can enable the concerned stakeholders in the Ministry of Higher Education to better identify and evaluate the current curriculum problems at the Colleges of Applied Science. This study will also contribute to the ELT literature in Oman and will help to provide practical solutions based on the perspectives of EAP practitioners to some of the problems related to ELT policy implementation in the Omani ELT context.

Another significant point which is expected to be reinforced throughout the study is the critical fact stated in the World Bank development report (2008) concerning the approach of 'command and control' adopted by many educational systems in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) countries including Oman. Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi (2012, p. 148) have stated that MENA countries will need to shift their educational approach from 'command and control' to 'contribute and evaluate' to ensure quality in their educational organizations. This study is informed by the belief that adopting the approach of 'contribute and evaluate' necessitates providing EAP teachers at the colleges with the opportunity to be active participants in the educational process through their contributions to the various areas of EAP curriculum.

1.6 Structure of the Study

The introductory chapter specifies the nature of the study describing the rationale and the significance of the research and extrapolates the main research questions which will be further investigated throughout the study.

Chapter two, the background and the context of the study, aims at describing the context of teaching English for Academic Purposes at the various higher education institutions in general and the context of EAP courses at the Colleges of Applied Sciences in particular. The remaining discussion in this chapter will introduce an overview on the English language programme which is taught at the colleges and a particular indication will be made about the EAP curriculum components at the colleges. Reference will also be made to the current socio-political factors which are seen as indispensable to facilitate the understanding regarding the existing curriculum issues at the colleges.

Chapter three, the literature review and the theoretical framework, will provide a detailed discussion on the most important models and theoretical approaches for curriculum development and will provide explanations about these various approaches in relation to the context of the study. The literature review chapter will also consider the most relevant and updated empirical studies conducted related to EAP curriculum issues to inform the current study.

Chapter four sets the methodological orientation of the research and describes the most significant characteristics which signify this particular research approach. This chapter will describe the theoretical research paradigm which will be used to inform and guide the conducted study and will introduce the methodology and particular methods used for data collection and data analysis. This chapter will also allude to the procedures followed to comply with research ethical considerations.

Chapter five will present the research findings and discuss and interpret the themes which emerged from the data analysis process. Chapter 6, the discussion chapter, is designed to tackle the significant issues raised in the analysis chapter to be discussed in association with the socio-political and contextual factors which are believed to have an impact on the current study.

Chapter 7, the conclusion, generates a number of implications and recommendations to deal with the existing curriculum issues at the Colleges of

Applied Sciences in Oman and suggests possible areas which deserve more attention for future research. This chapter also provides the researcher's personal reflection concerning the investigated research topic.

Chapter Two: An Overview of the Context

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the contextual background for the current study. The chapter starts with a discussion on English language teaching at higher education institutions in Oman. This chapter will provide an overview on the English language programmes at the Colleges of Applied Sciences with a particular focus on the structure of the EAP programme.

2.2 The Status of English in Higher Education in Oman

The English language has a prominent status within the Omani educational system. English language competency has not only been associated with academic achievement and excellence in schools and universities but it is also viewed as an asset highly evaluated in job candidates by employment agents in the public and the private sectors. The interest in teaching English has evolved concurrently with the various development stages of the Omani educational system as evidenced over the past few decades. English language teaching has received considerable attention by the government to satisfy the increasing demand for English in various economic, technological, vocational and educational settings. The continued interest attributed to English language teaching in Oman has resulted in the standardization of the use of English as the medium of instruction in public and private higher education institutions. The educational cycle has accelerated since the renaissance phase which started in 1970 after which English was officially introduced as one of the main subjects in Omani government schools. Teaching English started in government schools 'from grade four until grade twelve' (Al-Lamki, 2009, p. 5). Al Lamki (2009) pointed out that early English course books were imported from popular established ELT publishers such as Longman until the year 1992 which witnessed the first production of English course books which were written locally in the Sultanate with the title *Our World Through English*. It is important to refer to the educational

philosophy adopted by the government at those early times which represents the basis on which the English curriculum was formulated. Al Lamki (2009) pointed out that as stipulated in the philosophy document of the English curriculum of the general education system, English language teaching was considered a valuable resource to accomplish national development by providing Omani nationals with the linguistic competence required for communication 'with private and governmental bodies inside and outside Oman' (Al Lamki, 2009, p. 5). One of the important discussions referred to by Al Lamki (2009) was the clear allusion to the concept of curriculum signifying the underlying educational philosophy in English language teaching. This discussion was furthered that after the 1990s a process of educational reform was initiated by the government which covered different aspects of the educational system including 'national education goals, curricula, teaching methods, administrative structures, supervision and assessment of students' performance' (Al Lamki, 2009, p. 11) . With regards to curriculum, the educational phase of reform introduced a new understanding to the concept of curriculum which was not restricted to the content of the course textbooks, but rather an encompassing process pertaining to the various learning experiences related to the subject area whether these learning experiences are in or outside the classroom.

Al Badwawi (2011) stated that the Omani educational system witnessed two fundamental stages of development: General Education and Basic Education. The distribution of schooling years in the first phase of General Education (1970-1998) was: six years of elementary schooling, three years of preparatory schooling, and three years of secondary schooling. In the General Education stage, English was considered a compulsory subject starting from Grade four until Grade twelve. The second phase of Basic Education started in 1998 and at this particular stage, English was taught to students as a basic subject from Grade one and was a requirement until Grade twelve.

This process of educational reform was further discussed by Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi (2012) who stated that the Ministry of Education in Oman employed systematic development plans in the field of education. The Ministry of Education introduced the BES during (1998-1999) which was seen as a promising 'scientific and pedagogic education development project' consisting of 10 years of schooling. This educational project required comprehensive changes in areas covering the school system, content of curriculum, textbook development, means of assessment and teacher training. After the Basic Education stage, students are enrolled in the Post-Basic or Secondary Education which lasts for two years (Grade11 and Grade 12). Throughout this stage, students are introduced to 'proper communication skills, problem solving skills, use of mathematics skills, personal and social skills and information technology literacy' (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p. 144).

The educational reform initiatives made by the Ministry of Education were comprehensive particularly because these initiatives were also intended to achieve curriculum reform as well. This was represented through the flexibility given to students during their two years of Post-Basic Education in which they are offered a host of optional courses to choose from such as: English language skills, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Computer Business, Economic Geography, Geography and Modern Technology, History (Islamic civilization), History (The World Around Me), School Physical Education, Computer Science, Graphic Design, Artistic Skills and Musical Skills (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Research from the previous historical overview of the educational system in Oman shows a significant increase in English language instruction from 600 hours throughout their twelve years of formal schooling before the educational phase of reform to 1200 hours after the reform. Al Badwawi (2011) argued this increase in the English language instruction hours represented a transformation in the philosophy underlying English language teaching in Oman. In the new philosophy, the status of English language is promoted to a higher level and is believed to

serve a national cause. English is not only a linguistic tool of communicating with people from different backgrounds, but it is seen as a valuable resource to achieve national development in Oman. English language teaching has acquired a strategic importance in Omani future national development plans especially with it being viewed as an essential requirement of university and college students in order to deal with rapid changing technologies and developing national business opportunities' (Al Lamki, 2009, p. 12-13).

Despite the fact that the time devoted for teaching English language was increased in schools, secondary school graduates still need to undergo intensive English language programmes in most higher education institutions in Oman. This issue was further alluded to by Al Mahrooqi (2012) who argued that the reasons behind students' weakness in English language at school levels could be attributed to 'ineffective teachers, inadequate curricula, uninterested students, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, unsupportive parents, a poor school system, and peer-group encouragement" (263).

Al Bakri (2017) presented a critical view about the prominence of English in higher education in Oman. She discussed that through many Arab countries including Oman adopt EMI policy at tertiary level in order to reform their educational systems, this policy can be problematic for the students' academic achievement. This is because students might graduate from college to realize that their 'English language competence is of insufficient standard for employment' (Al Bakri, 2017, p. 200). The view that the EMI policy should be questioned gives an indication that successful implementation of this policy requires more students' involvement in the educational cycle which is currently lacking in the higher education context in Oman.

The previously stated discussion refers to the noticeable achievement made by the Ministry of Education in Oman with respect to educational reform which was executed as part of the educational policy rules and regulations approved by the

official authorities. Though the Ministry of Education has exerted huge efforts to achieve educational reform, teachers have had limited roles in the decision-making process concerning curriculum, evaluation and other aspects of educational reform. This is also accurate in the context of English language teaching in higher education institutions in which the teaching staff members are expected to be implementers of the standardized curriculum rather than stimulators of any successful initiative towards curriculum development or reform. More discussion in curriculum related issues in the context of English language teaching in the higher education context will be provided in the following sections.

2.3 English Language Teaching at Higher Education Institutions

English language teaching in the higher education context in Oman is provided through various public and private higher education institutions. In her description of the higher education landscape in Oman, Al Badwawi (2011) noted that public institutions are responsible for the provision of higher education in conjunction with the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Defense as well as the Central Bank of Oman.

English is the official language of instruction in most of the colleges at Sultan Qaboos University which is the only public university in Oman. English is the medium of instruction in the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Engineering, Sciences, Agricultural and Marine Sciences, and Economics and Political science. English is also the medium of instruction in the English language teaching programme in the University's College of Education and the Department of English Language, Literature and Translation in the College of Arts and Social Sciences.

English is the official medium of instruction in other public higher education institutions including the Colleges of Applied Sciences (six colleges) including Rustaq Education College, Higher Colleges of Technology (six colleges), Health Sciences Institutions (five institutions), Nursing institutions (eleven institutions), College of Banking and Financial Studies, the Royal Air Force of Oman Academy, the International Maritime College Oman, and Oman Academy of Tourism and Hospitality (ibid).

The emergence of globalization has had a great influence on the higher education sector in most of the Arab and GCC countries including Oman. In 2005, Oman signed the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and has accordingly become part of the global highly competitive market which required an increased effort from the Omani government to 'upgrade the quality of its labor force to survive the competition' (Al Hajri, 2013, p. 9). The Omani government began to direct its efforts on the development of the higher education sector in order to strike a balance between higher education and the demands of the evolving job market. Don and Al Manthri (2010) acknowledged the great impact of globalization on the Omani labor market stressing the need for equipping graduates with the required skills to compete in the private labor market which is highly dominated by expatriates. This explains the Sultanate's comprehensive assessment of the job market demands which have influenced Oman's planning schemes to conform to 'labor market analysis at both the institutional and ministry levels' (Al Shemli, 2009, p. 16).

There is a solid belief in the higher education literature recognizing the proliferation of higher education programmes taught in English around the world and their links to globalization. The research suggests that the presence of such courses have had a consequential economic impact which has necessitated 'the use of English as the lingua franca' (Altbach and Knight, 2007, p. 291). According to the regulations of the Omani Ministry of Higher Education, possessing an acceptable level of proficiency in English is a requirement to access most public and private

higher education institutions (HEIs). However, there are a number of issues which need to be realized in order to have a broader conceptualization of the current ELT context in Oman. One of the main issues which constitute a barrier to ELT in higher education institutions is the low level of English language proficiency of secondary school graduates. According to Al Mamari (2012) this particular issue is attributed to the gap which exists between secondary school education and university education. This issue has greatly influenced students' academic achievement of English language in the General Foundation Programmes (GFP) which have been adopted by all public and private higher education institutions.

The second issue in terms of importance which also needs to be considered in our speculative assessment of the ELT context in higher education is the issue of English language programmes offered by the current higher education institutions adopting foreign curricula which is outsourced by external education providers (Baporikar and Shan, 2012). Though these external materials and course contents could fit within western universities, they might be targeted to a level higher than the level of students in the local context. The question which mainly concerns those who are in influential positions and are able to change the English language policy implementation is whether the adopted foreign curricula which is outsourced by western education providers are carefully designed and evaluated to meet the local market needs, our students' understanding and learning abilities as well as their expected employment skills. The issue of evaluating course materials is significant especially that neither students nor teachers at the CAS context are being involved in the evaluation of existing materials which creates a major challenge to the development of the EAP programme and such involvement is one of the concerns of my study.

The third problem worth mentioning in this investigation is related to the lack of systematic initiatives of curriculum development in the context of English language teaching at various higher education institutions in Oman. Al Jardani (2012)

stressed that the current miscommunication between the curriculum department and the field practitioners at the Ministry of Education in Oman pose a barrier to the process of ELT curriculum and evaluation. This problematic phenomenon of lack of communication and collaboration between curriculum designers and curriculum providers is also evident in the context of ELT among higher education institutions which can be described as lacking for a framework of curriculum development and evaluation (ibid).

Another significant challenge in the sector is the teaching hours, particularly for non-Omani teachers. Expatriate teachers, who constitute the majority of teaching staff members in public and private higher education institutions, are expected to carry out heavy teaching loads and be available at their desks for a set number of hours to advise their students. The current state of English language teaching at higher education institutions isn't appealing for many expatriate teachers particularly that most professional development programmes in these institutions target Omani teaching staff and in many cases exclude expatriate teachers. This issue has been highlighted by Al-Ghatrifi (2016) who indicated that the current differential treatment between expat and local teaching staff members in the English departments at CAS colleges in terms of financial promotions can be seen as one of the challenges which have influenced curriculum development.

2.4 English Language Teaching at Colleges of Applied Sciences

The Colleges of Applied Sciences were established in 2005 and after a detailed assessment of the local market needs by the Ministry of Higher Education the result was the conversion of five teacher training colleges into the Colleges of Applied Sciences. The Colleges of Applied Sciences which are six in total currently offer degree programmes in Engineering, Information Technology, Design, International Business Administration, and Communication Studies, Applied Biological Technology and (English Teacher Preparation Programme which is offered only in Rustaq Education College). The Ministry of Higher Education

decided English would be the language of instruction in these colleges, stressing the importance of the establishment of an English language programme in preparing students for their future professional roles in the job market.

The Colleges of Applied Sciences are second in status after Sultan Qaboos University which is perceived as the most prestigious higher education institution in Oman. This is due to the high entry requirements at the University's various academic departments. This means only those who are considered the elite level students from secondary schools are accepted to continue their studies at Sultan Qaboos University. Students who are enrolled at the Colleges of Applied Sciences generally have lower academic abilities in terms of their educational achievement and English proficiency compared to SQU students.

English language was chosen as the language of instruction across the Colleges of Applied Sciences including Rustaq College of Education. According to the registration regulations implemented at the colleges, students enrolled in various academic disciplines have to complete a Foundation Programme which is a requirement for all the students in almost all of the Higher Education institutions in Oman (Al Hajri, 2013). The Foundation Programme provided by Colleges of Applied Sciences adheres to the Oman Accreditation Council's General Foundation Programme Standards, 'which state that students must demonstrate satisfactory achievement of learning outcomes in all four of the following curricular areas: English, Math, ICT and Study Skills' (Foundation Programme Prospectus, 2017-2018). As stipulated in the Foundation Programme Prospectus 2017-2018) initial entry will be determined by compulsory English placement testing for students which will be carried out in September. After the placement test, students will be distributed into four levels.

Table 2.1: Levels of the Foundation Programme

D (equivalent of IELTSs 3.0)	FPEL0600
C (equivalent of IELTSs 3.5)	FPEL0700
B (equivalent of IELTSs 4.0)	FPEL0801 & FPEL0802
A (equivalent of IELTSs 4.5 with no component less than 4)	FPEL0901 & FPEL0902 or sit for Waiver Test

Students who don't pass the English component of the Foundation Year will be permitted to re-enter within one academic year of passing the English Challenge Test which is administered three times per year (September, January, and May). CAS students must pass the Foundation Year with a minimum IELTSs equivalent score of 4.5 in order to proceed to the degree programmes of their respective majors. The students are not obliged in any way 'to achieve an official IELTSs score and indeed students in the CAS will have their exam marks converted to an IELTSs equivalent by the Colleges without having to take the IELTSs exam' (Ismail, 2011, p. 19). The point which needs to be stressed here is the great deal of flexibility exercised by the English programme with regards to providing ample opportunities for foundation students to move from one level to another which has resulted in allowing more students to reach the desired score of 4.5 to pass this non-credit intensive English programme.

The English programme is managed by a Programme Director, working with an Assistant Programme Director, who both engage a support team which assists in managing the programme at strategic and operational levels. The English Programme is offered in all six colleges with a similar management structure in Sur, Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah, and Ibri. The English departments comprise of a Head

of Department with the assistance of five Coordinators, Foundation, Year 1, Year 2, Assessment, E-Learning, each of whom reports to the HOD at the colleges and directly to the Programme Director. The duties of the Foundation, Year 1 and Year 2 coordinators require the management of their groups of teachers and the delivery of the programme at their level in each college. The structure of the English department at Rustaq College is slightly different because of its continuing Education Programme. In Rusatq College, there is an HOD assisted by two Unit Heads, one for the ELT and one for service English. The Service English Unit includes the same five roles performed by level Coordinators (English Programme Self-Evaluation for Graduation Review, 2011).

One of the major structural challenges which has largely influenced the development of English language teaching at the Colleges of Applied Sciences is the evident discrepancy observed between the level of Year 1 entrants enrolled in the various degree programmes and the level of English actually required by the students to cope with the input of the degree programmes' modules. In the 2011 edition of the English Department Self-Evaluation for Graduation Review an analysis of the major-programmes input (textbooks, lecture materials such as PowerPoint Slides, teacher talk) showed the input was aimed at a level equivalent to IELTSs 6.0 or above. However, CAS students enter Year 1 with an equivalent score of 4.5 or 5.0 which explains why students struggle to comprehend the content of EAP courses and the various courses of their degree programmes. It was further pointed out in the self-assessment report, the source of the problem lies with the low level of the Foundation intake, 40% of whom have an IELTSs equivalent score between 1.0 and 3.0.

Since the current study is concerned with the investigation of the curriculum development challenges in courses of English for Academic Purposes, the following section will describe the EAP courses provided at the colleges and will highlight some of the major issues which may be responsible for hindering the process of EAP curriculum development.

2.5 English for Academic Purposes in Colleges of Applied Sciences

With respect to students' enrolment at CAS colleges, Al Badwawi (2011) indicated "students are admitted into the Colleges of Applied Sciences based on their overall grades in the General Education Certificate of which English is only a subject" (p.15). Upon entrance to the college, students are registered in the intensive non-credited Foundation Year Programme (FYP) and after passing this programme, they continue studying English as an academic subject for two years. In their first and second academic years, students are required to be enrolled in courses of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). These EAP courses are aimed at equipping the students with the necessary linguistic tools which will enable them to successfully manage their studies in their major programmes. In the EAP courses, students are introduced to the academic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In their first academic year, students study two courses of English for Academic Purposes: (ENAP1001) and (ENAP1002) which are allocated 10 teaching hours. In their second academic year, two more EAP courses are provided for the students of which 8 hours of instruction are allocated for each course in every semester. According to (the Course Specifications, 2013) EAP courses are aimed at developing the students' abilities to understand and express complex ideas about academic topics. The last credited English course offered for the students in their second academic year is referred to as English for Academic and Specific Purposes. This course is allocated 8 hours of teaching per week and students are provided with more exposure to subject-specific genres and lexis.

Though the last course provided for the students in their second academic year is designated as (ESP) English for Specific Purposes, in reality it is an EAP course since it doesn't have any specific input which makes it distinctive in nature from the other EAP courses provided for the students. While the ESP course provided for second year students is expected to provide students with more exposure to subject-specific genres and lexis, it is not different from the other existing EAP courses.

The main objectives of the English Programme with respect to the provision of EAP courses at the colleges as stipulated in the English Programme Self-Evaluation for Graduation Review, 2011) are:

1. To provide students in Year 1 and Year 2 with strategic listening and reading skills to help them cope with lectures, presentations and academic texts.
2. To provide students in Year 1 and Year 2 with discussion and presentation skills to enable them to participate successfully in seminars and give effective presentations.
3. To provide students with generic academic writing skills to enable them to cope with assignments and projects.
4. To provide students with project-related planning and execution skills.
5. To ensure students have mastered at least 60% of the Coxhead Academic Word list and consolidated their mastery of core grammar.

In the context of teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in the Colleges of Applied Sciences, there is a limited conception of curriculum among administrators and teaching staff members. This is because of the teachers' tendency to relate EAP curriculum challenges to particular components of the curriculum which provides evidence to suggest that the prevailing understanding of curriculum is quite limited. EAP teachers' current approach towards curriculum makes them see only those curriculum components by which they are directly influenced. Drawing on my own experience as a Level Coordinator in the English Department at College of Sohar for Applied Sciences, I realized that EAP teachers at the college are concerned with a number of issues, one of which is the unsuitability of the implemented textbooks for the students' linguistic and academic level. Teachers have also reported there are other problems related to continuous and final assessment schemes. The various problems associated with assessment require a deeper investigation however the current study may assist in pinpointing these problems to reach a comprehensive understanding of the problematic areas in the

EAP curriculum. While it is important to clarify that the English curriculum and assessment at the colleges is outsourced to Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), there are some responsibilities which are expected to be performed by the English programme administrators at the Ministry. According to the agreement signed with the New Zealand Tertiary Education Consortium, it is only the course outlines and some learning materials which are provided by New Zealand while the design and creation of other curriculum components are required to be developed by the English programme directors according to the regulating guidelines approved by the consortium.

A number of proposals have been submitted by some colleges to the programme directors supporting the approach of shifting the current EAP courses into courses of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to satisfy the demands of the other applied majors at the colleges. There has not been any change to the implemented EAP programme and all the proposals which were raised on this regard, though, appealed to many administrators and teachers, are still merely concepts which have yet to be implemented. The programme directors have stated in most of their official meetings held with HODs and level coordinators that the transformation to (ESP) is a big step which will require major changes to the Academic Regulations and will also require huge efforts and expertise in materials writing. The current EAP programme is still going through a series of challenges which require action and serious efforts aimed at curriculum development. This is why supporting the approach towards the shift to ESP may be risky at the time being and will even require more analysis and assessment about the unexpected challenges which may arise due to this huge transformation in the English programme.

Drawing on my experience as a staff member and level-coordinator at the English Department at Colleges of Applied Sciences, my view is that the current practice of ELT curriculum at the colleges lacks a coherent framework. Unlike the ELT programme provided by the Ministry of Education for which a curriculum philosophy was stipulated in (the Philosophy and Guidelines for the Omani English

Language School Curriculum document referred to as the National English Language Policy/Plan (NELP) Nunan, Tyacke & Walton (as cited in Al Issa, 2014, p. 258), there is no existing document for the philosophy of the English curriculum in the Ministry of Higher Education. The only existing documents describe the English courses provided at the colleges. However, the educational philosophy of the English programme could still be inferred from the programme's goals and objectives. The educational philosophy of the English programme at the colleges is geared towards the same objectives stated in the (NELP) document in which English is emphasized as central to Oman's continued national development.

2.6 EAP Programme Curriculum Structure

Year 1 and Year 2 students are enrolled in EAP courses as will be shown in the following table. In Year 1, students are required to study ENAP 1001 and ENAP 1002 and in Year 2, they are required to study ENAP2001 and another ESP course which has a different code for each specialization as illustrated in the following table.

Table 2.2: Courses of English for Academic Purposes

ENAP1001	Required	No prerequisite
ENAP1002	Required	ENAP1001
ENAP2001	Required	ENAP1002
(ENIT2002, ENGL2255, ENDN2001, ENMC2003) English for Specific Purpose	Required	ENAP2001

What should be clarified here is that all CAS students must finish the EAP courses with the exception of engineering students who have a different study plan,

requiring them to take only two EAP courses within the first academic year. The engineering programme offered in Sohar College for Applied Sciences (Center of Specialization) was established in 2009 and was developed by the faculty of Engineering at Sultan Qaboos University. According to the agreement signed with SQU, the Engineering programme director approved the specialization's study plan which requires the fulfilment of only two EAP courses.

2.6.1 EAP Textbooks

EAP courses delivered in the English Programme are based on published textbooks, supplemented with in-house materials. The implemented series of textbooks used cater to the five intended levels as the series of *Inside Reading* is for reading classes whereas the *Lecture Ready* series is for listening classes. The writing skills course uses, *Effective Academic Writing* which is used in EAP courses and concentrates on particular academic writing conventions at each EAP level. One consistently raised issue by EAP teachers is that the currently implemented textbooks fail to prepare students for their English medium specializations in applied sciences. The point which needs to be highlighted here is that the problem may not necessarily lie in the textbooks but instead can be associated with other factors such as students' English proficiency level and the extent to which teachers are capable of facilitating the content of the textbooks to enrich the students' learning experiences.

2.6.2 Pedagogical Methods

EAP teachers at CAS colleges have the freedom to select the appropriate teaching methodologies which will work best for them. Though granting teachers with absolute freedom to select their teaching methodology can be positively viewed by teachers, there should be an agreement on how the intended academic skills are best transferred to the students. With the absence of a functioning

teachers' observation and evaluation scheme in place, the issue of teaching methodology will require far more investigation if our ultimate goal is geared towards curriculum development. It was stated in the English Programme Self-Evaluation for Graduation Review (2011) that the English programme is not designed to be prescriptive in terms of the methodology adopted by EAP teachers though their pedagogical methods could be broadly related to 'the communicative approach'. Teachers are expected to concentrate on encouraging students to learn 'to communicate relatively accurately and fluently in the academic environments in which they find themselves in CAS'. Teachers are also expected to facilitate the learning of linguistic knowledge (discoursal, lexico-grammatical, phonological) and other areas of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

2.6.3 Teaching Staff

There are approximately 250 teaching staff members in the English departments across the six colleges with the majority being expatriate native and non-native speakers of English from various countries. Expatriate teachers are of various nationalities and are hired through recruitment agencies or through the Directorate of Colleges in the Ministry. There are also Omani teaching staff members who are directly recruited by the Ministry of Higher Education and are required to have the minimum of a Master degree in TESOL. Recruitment procedures for expatriate teaching staff are guided by Oman Academic Standards which require a Bachelor's degree (in a relevant subject, Master's degree in a relevant subject or a qualification in English Language Teaching (ELT) (e.g. CELTA, Trinity TEFL certificate) (QAAA, 2009). It is also required for expatriate teachers to have at least two years' experience at the tertiary level. This leads to one of the main problems in the context of ELT at the colleges which is the high attrition rate of expatriate teachers. Pay-rates for CAS expatriate teachers are not competitive regionally and the professional development opportunities provided for expatriate teachers are

very limited compared to Omani teaching staff members. To an extent, the Colleges of Applied Sciences are generally unable to attract the better-qualified and experienced teachers. English teachers are expected to teach an average of 16 hours every week except for (level, assessment and E-learning) coordinators whose teaching load is reduced to 10 hours per week. As for the expatriate teachers who are hired through recruitment agencies, their contracts are renewed annually. Expatriate teachers who are directly recruited by the ministry are given a two year contract which is renewed annually.

2.6.4 EAP Continuous Assessment and Final Assessment

There have been a number of issues with the implemented continuous assessment schemes in the EAP courses provided at the colleges. The EAP programme is currently implementing a continuous assessment which is designed to measure the students' progress in performing the course work which requires the production of a written report and a presentation. Students are expected to get continuous feedback from teachers on their performance throughout the course. Before 2011, 50% of the marks of the students' assessment were achieved through continuous assessment measures which were based on quiz regime which varied from level to level. Though there was some support, it became apparent that the quiz regime was not entirely satisfactory (a fact pointed out by an independent review of assessment in the English Programme, carried out by Reading University). According to this review of assessment, it was noted there was no clear relationship between the administered quizzes and the final exam. The quizzes were also uneven in terms of their quality and the quantity of the quizzes created other issues of adequate moderation and revision. The quiz regime failed to be an effective formative assessment measure. In 2011, a major transformation was made to continuous assessment in the design and standardization in all the EAP courses across the six colleges. All EAP courses currently expect students to work on a project related to their major involving

secondary research and culminating in the production of two assessed outputs: a presentation and a written report (English Programme Self-Evaluation for Graduation Review, 2011).

With regards to the final examination which is administered at the end of the EAP courses, it is allocated 50% of students' marks. In EAP courses for Year 1 and Year 2, the students undergo 3 hours of examination testing core-grammar, knowledge of the academic word list, listening, reading and writing skills, complemented with a speaking test in either paired-student format for Year 1 students or a solo-student format for Year 2 courses. The Final examination is based on a rigorous writing process based on detailed protocols and two basic phases of feedback as well as a stable exam-writing team.

Though standardizing the continuous assessment across the six colleges has been more effective in comparison to the previously implemented quiz regime, the current continuous assessment still poses some challenges to the teaching and learning process at the colleges. After three years of implementing the project-based continuous assessment scheme, this particular regime has proved to be problematic as well. EAP teachers have expressed concerns with the current continuous assessment suggesting they are not as effective because students proceed from one EAP course to another without any evidentiary improvement in their English language academic skills which is expected to assist them in their English medium studies. The main problem related to the current continuous assessment implemented in EAP courses at the colleges is the lack of differentiation and detailed specification between the project requirements of Year 1 and Year 2 courses. This has made both teachers and students view EAP continuous assessment as a repetitive cycle which does not seem to yield the expected academic improvement on the part of the students.

2.7 The Alignment of Curriculum Development and Professional Development at the Colleges of Applied Sciences

The discussion about curriculum development in educational settings tends to relate directly to the issue of professional development. In the context of EAP curriculum development at the colleges, there are a number of issues which deserve careful investigation. One of the significant issues in this particular context is the overall top-down approach being adopted by the Ministry under which EAP teachers are expected to be implementers of the content of the textbooks and facilitators of the continuous assessment project. The only flexibility allowed for teachers is in the use of their pedagogical teaching methods inside the classroom. Although this sort of flexibility tends to be favored by teaching practitioners as it allows them more autonomy with their students, this same flexible approach has created some unexpected problems regarding continuous assessment. Unlike experienced teachers, less qualified and inexperienced teachers strictly commit to the project requirements which result in vast differences in the students' project final marks due to the discrepancy which existed in the students' learning experiences.

Another important issue worth mentioning here is the lack of an actual process of curriculum development in EAP courses at the colleges. One reason why such a process doesn't exist is that the outsourced English language curriculum and assessment methods are regulated by the external provider and are not based on systematic needs analysis and they have little regard for the value attributed to teachers in curriculum development. Having a team of middle-managers or level coordinators which has been regarded by the English language administrators as a form of curriculum development represents a distorted conception of the ideal curriculum development process. This is because under the current structure in the English departments across the six colleges, only level coordinators and assessment coordinators are the ones involved in curriculum development initiatives. Level coordinators are responsible for supervising teachers, materials

management and management of continuous assessment and they can submit their proposals about any curricular issues directly to the programme director. Assessment coordinators are expected to control the writing of final exam according to a particular exam format. In light of the previously stated depiction of the reality of EAP courses, teachers' roles can be seen as limited to the implementation of their teaching duties isolated from making any valuable contribution in curriculum development in their context.

The discussion regarding curriculum development isn't complete, but tends to relate to the quality of final assessment schemes since they are produced by inexperienced coordinators who haven't received any training or qualification on writing exams. This particular problem invites the discussion about professional development opportunities which are very limited at the colleges and whenever they are made available, they generally target Omani teaching staff members who hold administrative posts such as HODs, level coordinators and assessment coordinators. With respect to the PHD scholarships which are distributed according to a plan approved annually for each college depending on the Ministry's needs, these scholarships are also specified for Omani teachers who have been nominated for these opportunities. PhD scholarships which are distributed across the colleges can be seen as a long term investment which may help in the future of curriculum development, but do not assist in providing direct remedies for the various curricular issues confronted by EAP teachers in our colleges.

With regards to the area of professional development, there is no framework being used at CAS to regulate current practices of professional development. The absence of a clear strategy for professional development is not limited to the context of English language teaching but as pointed out by Al-Aufi (2014) professional development opportunities for teaching staff members at various academic departments are currently below expectations. In the English departments across the six CAS colleges, current professional development

practices are being regulated and encouraged by HODs as part of their duties in their annual agenda. Based on my knowledge on the context of professional development at CAS Sohar, it appears that HODs negotiate and discuss the possibility of having a number of PD activities and some of these have been successful such as the mentoring scheme for new teachers as well as teachers led seminars throughout the academic semester. However, more needs to be done in this regard to motivate teachers to be engaged in professional development and to promote professional development as a culture which can contribute to the area of curriculum development at the colleges.

This study is targeted to underline the importance of creating an alignment between professional development opportunities and the various issues which have emerged at various aspects of the EAP curriculum. The current study is not limited to the investigation of EAP curriculum based issues but it also highlights the value of providing appropriate professional development opportunities for EAP teachers based on a careful assessment of existing curriculum challenges and teachers' needs to better contribute to the process of EAP curriculum development at the Colleges of Applied Sciences.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a discussion about the theoretical and philosophical issues related to curriculum development. The first part of this chapter will introduce a discussion on how curriculum is defined and conceptualized by curricularists in the literature. This chapter will also shed the light on some ideologies and curriculum models which are central to the discussion related to curriculum development. In this chapter, a reference will be made to some of the important debates in the context of teaching English for Academic Purposes. The second part of the chapter will approach some of the foreign and local empirical studies which are targeted at the investigation of various curriculum issues related to the current study.

3.2 Conceptualizing Curriculum

The process of conceptualizing curriculum in the literature has been influenced by different perspectives of theoreticians and educational researchers in an attempt to reach an explicit definition of what curriculum means. Numerous theories have been promoted to understand the concept of curriculum and most of the provided discussions failed to recognize that curriculum cannot be isolated from the social, economic and political factors which could have a direct influence on the practice, planning and development of curriculum. Over the past few decades, the field of curriculum studies has witnessed a productive movement oriented to the conceptualization of curriculum. This chapter is intended to expose some of the dominant fundamental definitions in the curriculum field in an attempt to allow for a better understanding of curriculum which will be compatible with the conceptual approach of the current research investigation. The chapter will also expose some of the empirical studies which have been oriented to the investigation of various issues related to curriculum.

The primary publications in which 'curriculum' was the prevailing subject have either approached curriculum in a narrowly focused or a broadly stated manner. Jackson (1992, p.3) explains the narrowly focused publications as characterized by their specification in how they focus on the 'evaluation' of specific subjects or topics with the curriculum of a particular school or set of schools. The other kind of publications according to Jackson (1992) are more broadly focused in the sense that they are dealing with topics of theoretical nature such as the discussion of general theories and principles of curriculum development or speculating on curriculum as an independent field of study.

In his allusion to the origins of 'curriculum' Jackson (1992) refers to the first usage of the word 'curriculum' and how it was concurrently applied as part of an organizational rearrangement. Jackson (1992) indicated that there was a need to standardize university studies in European centers of learning during the second half of the 16th century. The need was imposed by the Protestant reform movement which used the word 'curriculum' as an equivalent to internally structured educational programmes which were designed to last for several years.

Based on the historical reference given by Jackson (1992), it could be understood that the origins of curriculum studies didn't originate as a developed stream of a distinctive field of study but according to Lawn and Barton (1981, p. 21) it was established as a result of an administrative need rather than 'an intellectual necessity'.

Further contemplation about curriculum as represented in Jackson's explanation, which sees curriculum as a form of organization, implies that curriculum tends to be influenced by a set of administrative and pedagogical authorities. If curriculum is taken to be part of large organizational structures, these structures are likely to be 'imposed by authorities for the purpose of bringing order to the conduct of schooling' (Jackson, 1992, p. 5).

3.3 Towards Reconceptualization of Curriculum

Before initiating the discussion about some of the prevailing curriculum conceptions, a reference should be made at this point to an important transformative period in the history of curriculum studies. According to Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (2008), the traditional curriculum field before 1970 was primarily concerned with curriculum development rather than the understanding of curriculum. Pinar et al. (2008) indicated that the concerns of earlier curriculum specialists were devoted to elementary and secondary teachers and administrators. Pinar et al. (2008, p. 15) critiqued the approach of curriculum specialists at that time which preceded the reconceptualization era by stating 'there was little sense of developing a field devoted to accumulation of knowledge and to the enhancement of understanding, a field at once theoretical and historical.' It was further added by Pinar et al. (2008) that the traditional curriculum period which was characterized by focusing on the school curriculum and was dominated by the paradigm of curriculum development had limited the horizon of the curriculum field. In the 1970s, a paradigmatic shift occurred in the curriculum landscape for which the discourse of curriculum specialists was directed towards the reconceptualization of understanding curriculum.

One of the fundamental definitions of curriculum which has been influential for a long time is the notion of curriculum being a product which is confined within the boundaries of schooling. Marsh (1997) presents a constellation of the fundamental definitions and provides his interpretation of these definitions. He states how early definitions of curriculum talked about 'school curriculum' in a general sense relating curriculum to the range of subjects which are taught in schools and allocated a specific amount of instruction time. Marsh (1997) also alludes to the definition which is based on understanding curriculum as 'content' or 'syllabus'. He further explains how a 'syllabus' is seen as a document stating the content of what is to be taught in a course of study which is often combined with an external examination. Marsh (1997) critically stresses that our understanding of what curriculum is shouldn't be limited to the content of a syllabus since there are other

important factors which need to be considered such as teachers' methodological priorities as well as students' preparedness and motivation.

Marsh (1997) explains some other definitions of curriculum that adopt the curriculum as a product view which is seen as a limited approach in the process of understanding curriculum. He provides insight on how this particular definition conceptualizes curriculum as the document which stipulates 'goals, objectives, content, teaching techniques, evaluation and assessment, resources' (Marsh, 1997, p. 4). The understanding of curriculum as suggested by this definition alludes to the influence of the educational organizations in which curriculum is provided and represents their ideological and pedagogical preferences with respect to curriculum.

Some other definitions of curriculum which are characterized by their practical orientation define curriculum as 'a set of performance objectives'. This approach to curriculum puts more emphasis on the specific knowledge and skills which are expected to be attained by the students. Even though this approach has the merit of focusing on the students as the ultimate consumers in the curriculum 'cycle' as many would refer to it, it is still limited because 'performance objectives' are one part of a whole continuous cycle of curriculum. Although all the provided definitions referred to by Marsh (1997) hold some truth in their approach to curriculum, our understanding of the word has to transcend the limitations and restrictions of these conventional definitions.

In relation to the limitations which characterize most of the definitions provided about curriculum as referred to by Marsh (1997), Wallin (2011) presents a sophisticated ontological perspective about the multiple representational patterns of difference which influence the way we conceptualize curriculum. He expresses his concern on the inadequate conceptualization of difference which dominates the contemporary curriculum landscape due to the multiplicity of curriculum definitions. He explains how the curriculum landscape is structural in nature and is largely dominated by the identitarian thought 'the a priori image of how a pedagogical life should be.' It was further suggested by Wallin how people tend to apply

identitarian thinking which makes them see curriculum-as-plan. This theory suggests whenever the word curriculum is brought up, our thinking is geared towards a fixed 'representational image of thought' created by prior images and assumptions about curriculum which affect different ways of pedagogic practice and consequently constrain the way we think about pedagogical life (Wallin, 2011, p. 286).

Wallin's discussion is quite important as it provides a rational ontological investigation which requires key players in the curriculum cycle to be alert and not to be misled by the existence of some representational patterns of thinking that distort a large part of the truth about how curriculum should best be perceived. He stresses how in the contemporary curriculum landscape, abstracted images of 'instruction', 'teaching', 'pedagogy' and 'implementation' tend to be 'derivatives in the shadow of the curriculum- as-plan' (Wallin, 2011, p. 291). Considering the rationale behind Wallin's argument, educational practitioners who are inclined to produce explicit conceptualization about curriculum need to be aware of the existence of such prevailing clichés. This is because such clichés can be far more powerful because they can orient our thinking of 'how pedagogical life ought to go' (Wallin, 2011, p. 293).

3.4 Tyler's Fundamental Interpretation of Curriculum

Ralph Tyler, is one of the prominent figures in the field of curriculum studies whose book *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* is seen as 'the Bible of curriculum making' (Jackson, 1992, p. 24). Tyler's book is aimed to outline his own perspective of interpreting curriculum implemented in an instructional programme of an educational institution. According to Tyler (1949, p. 1), the rationale of the book is founded on identifying four fundamental questions which should constitute the core of curriculum in educational programmes. These four questions are:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?

2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

There is a fifth question which didn't merit the same weight as the other questions and was allocated only three pages in Tyler's book. The question as stated in the last chapter of the book, 'How a school or college staff may work on curriculum building?' (Tyler, 1949, p. 126). Jackson (1992, p. 25) makes a clear indication to Tyler's fundamental curriculum questions which he views as 'basic principles' of Tyler's curriculum rationale. In his discussion of Tyler's rationale of curriculum, Jackson tended to restate Tyler's four questions and to associate each question with a curriculum element. Jackson (1992, p. 25) restates the four questions as follows:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain? [Objectives]
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes? [Design]
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized? [Scope and Sequence]
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? [Evaluation]

Tyler(1949, as cited in Jackson, 1992, p. 25)

Jackson's speculation on Tyler's rationale seems to be valid because the fundamental questions address the basic principles on which any curriculum should be founded. However, Tyler's rationale was limited in its interpretation of curriculum as it doesn't provide a conceptualization of curriculum but instead is characterized by its traditional orientation to curriculum development. Another limitation which can be seen in Tyler's rationale of curriculum is the lack of sufficient discussion provided on the role of teachers who constitute a very important curriculum element. Jackson's discussion was limited to the four questions which deserved more focus in Tyler's book disregarding the significant

role of 'school or college staff' who are expected 'to participate in curriculum planning at least to the extent of gaining an adequate understanding of these ends and means' (Tyler, 1949, p. 126). It is quite evident how though Tyler's rationale didn't give equal weight in his discussion of the basic curriculum principles, his approach located teachers whether in schools or colleges at the heart of the curriculum cycle. Teachers' duties according to the rationale promoted by Tyler aren't confined to curriculum design and implementation but they are expected to play active roles at institutional levels. Teachers are expected to work collaboratively as a committee in formulating the educational philosophy 'and to work out a statement of psychology of learning' (Tyler, 1949, p. 127).

Stenhouse (1975) provides a comprehensive framework encapsulating his perception regarding curriculum. Although Stenhouse's conception focuses on almost all the elements discussed by Tyler, he stresses on the significance of the justification and evaluation of all the educational decisions related to curriculum. Stenhouse's concern with justification and evaluation was evident in his definition of curriculum in which he stated, 'A curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form which is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice' (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 4). The allusion intended by Stenhouse signifies the importance of involving the key players of the educational cycle in a transparent dialogue to scrutinize, negotiate and evaluate all the aspects pertaining to curriculum planning and implementation.

The discussion about conceptualizing curriculum never ceased to expand as it became representative of the conflicting views and perspectives that were held by curriculum specialists. Reid (1992) promotes a different understanding about curriculum as he views it as a practice which comprises two important features. The first feature identifies curriculum as a practice with fuzzy edges because they overlap and interact with other practices. The second aspect posts the notion of curriculum being associated with institutions. Reid (1992) reinforces that our understanding of curriculum can only be adequate if we can realize to what extent

curriculum is being influenced by the existence of educational institutions. A powerful distinction Reid sets between his view of curriculum and other views is that he believes in the institutional aspect of curriculum. 'In other words, the institutional curriculum precedes the case – there is, for example, a demand from some politically or organizationally legitimated body that a certain level be achieved at a certain grade level, together with some criteria by which that achievement is to be assessed' (Reid, 1992, p. 15). Reid's implication of the inherent power of educational institutions and their influence on curriculum planning and implementation was explicitly indicated in his interpretation of curriculum. Reid's perception of curriculum as a practice is a powerful representation of the complex nature of this practice. Understanding curriculum will be insufficient, if it doesn't allow for an explanation of the 'existing institutions and of the conventions that they embody' (Reid, 1992, p. 16).

3.5 Recent Perspectives about Curriculum

The debate over conceptualizing curriculum continued to expand and many curricularists tended to contribute their perspectives of how they viewed curriculum. In her book, *'The Curriculum: Theory and Practice'*, Kelly (1999) distinguishes among a variety of denominations in her extensive discussion which is intended to define curriculum. Kelly refers to 'the total curriculum' asserting it shouldn't be viewed as limited to a certain aspect but instead it should rather be seen as a total curriculum which necessitates the collaboration of teachers and curriculum planners to establish a basis and 'develop a rationale on which some total scheme can be built.' Kelly represents her comprehensive understanding of the total curriculum as follows:

Any definition of curriculum, if it is to be practically effective and productive, must offer much more than a statement about the knowledge content or merely the subjects which schooling is to 'teach' or transmit. It must go far beyond this to an explanation, and indeed a justification, of

the purposes of such transmission and an exploration of the effects that exposure to such knowledge and such subjects is likely to have, or is intended to have, on its recipients-indeed it is from these deeper concerns, as we shall see later, that any curriculum planning worthy of the name must start. (Kelly, 1999, p.3)

In the previous quotation, Kelly expresses her view of how our understanding of curriculum needs to be founded on a total transcendent approach of curriculum by extending the scope of traditional definitions which sees it as content, a product or, a syllabus or the statement of the educational purposes. Kelly's definition of the total curriculum alludes to a significant factor which is the exploration of the effects which can be resulted from being exposed to knowledge. It is very clear both Stenhouse (1975) and Kelly (1999) regard the value attributed to the process of justification and evaluation to promote a better understanding of curriculum. It is interesting to see how early and recent some curriculum specialists have reached some common grounds in their conceptualization of curriculum.

Kelly (1999) attempts to make further clarification about the 'hidden' curriculum which refers to the learning experiences of pupils in schools but aren't overtly stated or articulated in school curricular arrangements. Though Kelly's reference to the 'hidden' curriculum is intended to widen our scope of understanding, her discussion of the planned and the received curriculum sounds more relevant to the current research investigation. Kelly (1999) explains how the planned curriculum which is intended to be stated in syllabuses and course outlines can be different from the actual curriculum received by the students. This distinction between the planned curriculum and the received curriculum presented by Kelly shouldn't be seen as problematic particularly since teachers are expected to have an understanding of when to adhere to the planned curriculum and when to be flexible using their own pedagogical creativity to maximize the educational experiences of their students.

Kelly's extended discussion refers to the formal and informal curriculum which is worth mentioning at this point. The formal curriculum represents the formal activities which are allocated specific periods of teaching time in the timetable and is seen to be complementary to the 'extra-curricular' activities. Kelly justifies her view by suggesting 'extra-curricular' activities such as sports, clubs, societies and school journeys should be seen as having as much educational validity and importance as any of the formal curricular school arrangements. It is significant to stress that despite the amalgam of curriculum denominations provided by Kelly, the teachers' role constitutes the most crucial element in all successful initiatives of curriculum development and implementation.

Carrol (2007, p. 2) describes curriculum as a dynamic process and he sees it as 'a social event engaged in by various groups, which brings into content institutional norms and behaviors on the one hand, and people's ideas about what they think should happen or what they would like to happen on the other.' Carrol (2007) provides a definition of curriculum that directs more emphasis on the involvement of those key participants in the curriculum dynamic process through providing their views and perceptions of 'what they think should happen or what they would like to happen' (p. 2).

The conceptualization of curriculum as a practice which was discussed earlier by Reid (1975) and Carrol (2007) seems to be the most relevant interpretation to curriculum as investigated in the current study. As an inside researcher who speculates over the existing circumstances of curriculum, my perception of curriculum suggests that it should always be a dynamic process. It is important to clarify even though the current study has a practical orientation which approaches the area of curriculum development in EAP courses at the Colleges of Applied Sciences, this practical orientation needs to be formulated on an explicit conceptualization of curriculum. This conceptualization requires that our views of what curriculum is should transcend the conventional ways

which restrict our understanding to be focused on certain curricular elements rather than viewing it in its entirety.

3.6 Curriculum Ideologies and Philosophical Orientations

Approaching a field such as curriculum studies requires an awareness of the conceptions and the philosophical underpinnings on which educational programmes are founded because curriculum studies cannot be conceived separately from the field of education. Curriculum perspectives as referred to by Richards (2001) are believed to represent the philosophical orientations of educational programmes and to provide justifications for their goals and objectives. Mackernan (2008, p. 26) states 'all curricula are based on a conception or vision of desirable qualities, or values.' When taking into consideration the various curriculum models that are important to our understanding of curriculum, a higher level of understanding is still required to grasp the underlying philosophical orientations which are relevant to the context of the current study. By using the terms ideologies and conceptions interchangeably in the pertinent literature, we tend to refer to the ideologies which have 'a political essence at their core' stressing their importance to develop a comprehensive understanding about curriculum (Mackernan, 2008, p. 22). Curriculum theoreticians discussed a number of curriculum ideologies which represent a set of orientations and values which signify their perspectives with regards to curriculum. It should be noted that ideologies are viewed differently from curriculum models because ideologies constitute the visions and values on which curriculum models are established. Curriculum models which will be discussed later in a separate section of this chapter will need to be based on certain philosophical orientations or ideologies in order to develop a clear understanding about curriculum.

Mackernan (2008) identified six curriculum conceptions, or ideological orientations which he derived from a survey work with teachers' value

systems around the world in an attempt to see if they correlate with curriculum ideologies found in the theoretical discussions in the literature.

Mackernan (2008, p. 27) stated that there are six ideologies:

1. Intellectual-Rationalist (Greek/Roman/Medieval);
2. Theo-Religious (Christian-Scholastic, Islamic, Jewish);
3. Social-Romantic (Child-centered);
4. Technical-Behavioral (Science-Efficiency);
5. Personal-Caring (Existentialist- self-growth and self-realizing);
6. Critical-Political (equality- meliorist)

These curriculum conceptions were also discussed by Richards (2001) who tended to use different labels or names to refer to these conceptions in his discussion. Unlike Mackernan (2008), Richards (2001, p. 113) identifies five curriculum ideologies that are seen as encapsulating the understanding of curriculum planners 'of the present and long-term needs of learners and of society as well as the planners' beliefs and ideologies about schools, learners and teachers.' Richards (2001) curriculum ideologies are:

1. Academic rationalism
2. Social and economic efficiency
3. Learner-centeredness
4. Social reconstructionism
5. Cultural Pluralism

Mackernan's six curriculum ideologies are considered crucial to the investigation of the current study. These curriculum ideologies will be discussed in the following sections while more focus will be directed to three major orientations; the technical-behavioral ideology, the learner-centeredness, and the critical-political ideology. These three ideologies will receive an in-depth analysis because they constitute the fundamental ideologies on which this research is based.

1. Intellectual-rationalist ideology

Mackernan's intellectual –rationalist ideology of curriculum is referred to as 'the Academic rationalism' by Richards (2001) and was the earliest conception of education in the Greek and Roman states as well as the early universities in Europe. This particular conception is based on the vision of which 'the function of education is to cultivate the intellect and to further intellectual growth by subjecting students to the most rational forms of subject organization' (Mackernan, 2008, p. 28). Richards (2001, p. 114) explained further how the academic rationalism conception as he referred to it 'stresses the intrinsic value of the subject matter and its role in developing the learners' intellect, humanistic values and rationality.' He added that this philosophical orientation of curriculum was quite influential in some parts of the world such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia in which the English curriculum was intended to be traditionally a literature-based curriculum. Although, the implemented curriculum was aimed at achieving 'the elitist status of English medium education', subsequent curriculum innovations proved to be more functional and practical with the spread of English-medium education in these parts of the world (Mackernan, 2008, p. 115).

2. Theo-religious ideology

According to Mackernan (2008), this curriculum conception is widely practiced in educational institutions which provide religious education and training for the students similar to the religious schools in Egypt from 3000 BC and 'the Cathedral Schools' which are known in many western educational traditions. A reference should be made here to Oman in which the current research investigation is based concerning the theo-religious ideology which was quite evident in the Omani educational system. According to Al-Salimi (2011, p. 148) in the past 'the educational system was based on a traditional approach consisting of several stages in which one began with classes in mosques and proceeded to private study with scholar.' During this time in Oman's history, Muscat became the center for religious education and attracted many

scholars from around the country. It was further discussed by Al-Salimi (2011) how after his Majesty Sultan Qaboos began ruling the government in 1970, Islamic studies were integrated into the public school system and the traditional religious education continued as well. Today, religious education is still operating and is managed by the Ministry of the Royal Court which currently supervises the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque and the schools of Quranic studies.

The previous discussion provided by Al-Salimi (2011) gives a clear indication that the Omani educational system is based on a number of ideologies one of which is the religious ideology which is still being integrated in a number of public educational institutions.

3. Social-Romantic Ideology

The social-romantic orientation is based on directing great attention to the interests and needs of the child rather than the content of certain subjects to be taught. According to this educational ideology which is discussed by Mackernan (2008), there is a strong belief in the potentialities and the nature of the human development. This ideology requires a transformation in the conventional roles of teachers 'from subject expert to facilitator; from judge to advisor; from text master to inquiry centered teaching role' (p. 29).

4. Technical-behavioral ideology

This technical-behavioral ideology which is being referred to as the 'social and economic efficiency' or the 'socio-economic ideology' as discussed by Richards (2001, p. 115) is based on the belief that the practical needs of the learners and those of the society are important. This educational philosophy suggests that educational programmes should aim for producing economically productive learners. Mackernan (2008, p. 29) highlighted that this ideology views students 'as consumers in the capitalist system: producing, consuming, measuring, and vocalization.' Mackernan's views are quite similar to Richard's since they both believe this philosophical orientation is geared towards preparing students to be

active contributors to the market economy and globalization. This particular ideology will receive extended discussion towards the end of this section because it serves as one of the major ideologies which will inform the current research investigation.

5. Personal-caring ideology

Mackernan (2008, p.30) proposes that this ideology emphasizes the importance of the teachers' role in providing support and guidance and 'caring for the total needs of the students.' This educational philosophy is more concerned with the values of 'self-actualization, inner harmony, self-respect, dignity and worth of persons.' Although this ideology may appear similar to 'the learner-centeredness' ideology discussed by Richards (2001) because they both prioritize the individualistic needs of the learners, there are some distinctive qualities which characterize each orientation. The personal-caring ideology according to Mackernan (2008) places more significance and value on the humanistic features of students because it tends to be more concerned with spiritual developments of the students. However, the learner-centered approach presented by Richards (2001) stresses the value and the role of the human experience in the learning process. The constructs of 'self-reflection' and 'critical thinking' are conceived as major characteristics of this ideology. Richards believes that the theoreticians who embrace constructivist perspectives feel that the power of this educational philosophy is derived from the capacity of the learning experiences from which students can construct knowledge by resorting to their previously acquired understandings. Based on this orientation, curriculum development and planning initiatives need to consider the learners' individual needs as a priority as opposed to the teaching-directed learning. The focus of this educational philosophy is always aimed at focusing on 'learner differences, learner strategies, and learner self-direction and autonomy' (Richards, 2001, p. 118). The learner-centered ideology will be discussed in the following section in relation to the Omani educational system providing direct reference to the context of this research study.

6. *Critical-Political ideology*

In his discussion on the critical-political ideology, Mackernan (2008, p. 31) stated that this ideology is targeted to expose the underlying values of the curriculum by considering schools as 'agencies of political and cultural renewal.' This particular orientation is largely concerned with addressing issues of 'social inequalities' to help in transforming the prevailing cultures through teaching people about equality and solving conflicts. Driven by a critical approach to education, this philosophy also seeks to provide opportunities for teachers, administrators as well as students by which they can feel empowered and evaluated. The empowerment of teachers as a core principal in the critical-political ideology was also discussed by Richards (2001) who referred to this orientation as social reconstructionism. Richards thinks that the process of empowerment can only be achieved through engaging teachers and students in the assessment of important social and personal issues in an attempt to settle them. Richards (2001) introduced another educational philosophy referred to as 'Cultural pluralism.' This ideology tends to be more relevant in educational settings that involve multicultural ethnic students. According to this orientation, curriculum needs to represent not only the perspectives of the dominant culture but it also needs to consider the viewpoints of various cultural groups through the development of 'cross-cultural competency' or what is termed 'intercultural communication.' (Richards, 2001, p. 119)

The following section will provide an intricate discussion on the major educational philosophies which are believed to inform the kind of investigation carried out by this research study. The researcher's conceptual framework is intended to be impeded throughout the discussion about the major philosophical orientations.

3.7 The Three Major Curriculum Ideologies of the Study

As stated earlier, the discussion on curriculum studies cannot be separated from understanding the prominent philosophical orientations which have influenced theory and practice in the field of education. Since the reconceptualization era of

curriculum studies in the 1970s'; 'the field of curriculum theory has begun to incorporate philosophical discourses into the very fabric of study of curriculum and instruction' (Slattery, 2006, p. 191). Slattery's point is valid as the field of education with all its complexities can best be understood by invoking the relevant philosophical ideologies in order to bring about a better understanding of curriculum issues. This section is intended to uncover the most important philosophical orientations which are believed to inform the current research investigation. Since the main objective of this research study is to explore the issues which hinder curriculum development of EAP courses in the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman, the understanding of constructs such as curriculum development, curriculum evaluation and teachers' contribution in curriculum will be approached adopting various philosophical conceptions. Slattery states (2006, p. 193) the 'philosophic understanding is a central dimension of contemporary curriculum discourses, and exploring this milieu and its ever changing nature is essential for those navigating the waters of the curriculum field in these turbulent times.'

3.7.1 Technical- Behavioral Ideology (Social and Economic Efficiency)

This section is aimed at the discussion of the Technical- Behavioral ideology which can best describe the current curriculum in the Omani educational system and will further explore its elements, procedures and practices. According to Mackernan (2008) this ideology emphasizes on providing curriculum for career work and equipping students with the required skills and competencies to prepare them for future employment. This philosophical orientation underpins all the higher education institutions in Oman including Colleges of Applied Sciences in which the study is taking place. The English courses of academic purposes provided for the college students are highly influenced by this educational philosophy as this orientation has proven to be influential not only at the level of the current EAP programme planning and evaluation but also at the level of visualizing teachers' roles in the process of curriculum development in these courses. This socio-

economic ideology as referred to by Richards (2001, p. 116) puts more emphasis on 'the economic needs of the society' as a clear justification for teaching English in educational institutions. Oman is one of the countries in which the underlying philosophy of the English curriculum in higher education has witnessed a transformation from academic rationalism towards socio-economic efficiency model. Richard's (2001) analysis of the efficiency model in curriculum planning is characterized by opting for the notion-functional syllabus and outcomes-based approaches which also describe the curriculum practice in higher education institutions in the Omani context. It should be noted whereas this educational philosophy is incorporated as a major underlying ideology in our colleges, it continues to lack an integral element which constitutes the foundation of this efficiency model of curriculum planning. According to Richards (2001) this approach to curriculum necessitates careful identification and assessment of the practical needs of the students and society. In the context of teaching EAP in Colleges of Applied Sciences, even though the course aims and objectives are presented clearly in the course outlines, these aims and objectives are not being carefully reviewed on a yearly basis to cater towards the emerging needs which should be integrated in the implemented curriculum. The technical-behavioral ideology which influences educational institutions in Oman is limited in its approach as it places more emphasis on the needs of the society which are highly oriented to survive the global competitive market. Though the technical-behavioral ideology is fundamental to the development of the educational sector in Oman, our educational philosophy should also focus on the significance of other ideologies such as the Learner-centeredness ideology and the critical-political ideology. These ideologies will receive further analysis in the following sections due to their significant contribution as basic elements in the conceptual framework of the current study.

3.7.2 Learner-Centeredness Ideology

The learner-centered ideology is based on the constructivist view which 'emphasizes that learning involves active construction and testing of one's own representation of the world and accommodation of it to one's personal conceptual framework' (Richards, 2001, p. 117). Nunan (1988) shows that the learner-centered approach needs to involve the learners as active participants in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught. This ideology formulates a fundamental element in the conceptual framework of the current research investigation because it highlights the importance of teaching and learning as socially constructed processes in which both students as well as teachers are expected to collaboratively contribute to the educational cycle. In the Omani context, the educational institutions began to realize the importance of this ideology as a core element in their educational objectives. However, many educational institutions are conceptually aware of the significance attributed to the ideology of learner-centeredness but there are still some existing factors which hinder successful implementation of this ideology. This is why this study is highly informed by the learner-centeredness ideology because it does not only allow educationalists to value its contribution towards the achievement of collaborative learning environments. However, it does call for more students' involvement in the curriculum which in the case of CAS colleges has been lacking in courses of English for Academic Purposes. Despite both policy makers and teachers at CAS being aware of the merits of the learner-centered ideology, current practices which have been influenced by the existence of a top-down leadership approach have limited the effectiveness of this ideology in the development of students' educational experiences. The learner-centeredness ideology which represents a crucial element of the study's conceptual framework implies that the reform of higher education institutions including CAS can only be achieved if they direct 'efforts to prioritize students' needs, motivations and interests and put them at the center of educational practice' (Emenyeonu, 2012, p. 245).

An important point to make here is that the elements of the learner-centered approach as practiced in the colleges could be improved to provide the students more opportunities 'to develop awareness, self-reflection, critical thinking, learner strategies, and other qualities and skills that are believed to be important for learners to develop' (Richards, 2001, p.117). The learner-centered approach which needs to be encouraged in the colleges should aim for 'active learning that promotes lifelong learning' (Emenyeonu, 2012, p. 244).

Emenyeonu (2012) conducted an exploratory study which was focused on investigating the barriers which hinder student-centered learning in Oman. This study brings about significant conclusions about the existing issues which surround the implementation of the student-centered approach in the Omani context. An important aspect which needs to be considered is that most of the inferred conclusions can be seen as a clear depiction of the situation at CAS colleges since a large number of the participants who participated in the study's focus group discussions including teachers as well as students were selected from the College of Nizwa for Applied Sciences which is one of the colleges investigated in the current research. The third focus group was selected from International College of Engineering and Management in Muscat which belongs to the higher education system in Oman. The study came up with some recommendations in order to support the successful implementation of SCL in Oman.

One of the recommendations brought up in the study is that students need further support to improve their English language proficiency through motivating them to participate between genders and to encourage students to build more confidence. Furthermore, teaching and learning materials should consider students' cultural background as it is a crucial element which can contribute to their motivation. Students should be encouraged to play active roles in the learning process rather than being mere recipients of knowledge. Teachers should work on developing critical and problem-solving skills in their students.

Another significant recommendation highlighted by the study is that teachers should use teaching methodologies which empower the students because 'any teaching methodology that does not put the students on the center stage is anti SCL' (Emenyeonu, 2012, p. 252). The study also indicates that to ensure successful implementation of SCL in Oman, we should aim for creating a lifelong learning environment as well as using teaching materials which are compatible with the SCL approach.

The previously conducted study signifies that even though the student-centered approach is encouraged in most of the educational programmes in Oman, the SCL implementation is seen to be confined to specific aspects of curriculum rather than being implemented as a successful encompassing educational practice. The study conducted by Emenyeono though provides a thoughtful discussion about the barriers that prevent successful implementation of SCL in the Omani context, it does not elaborate on the importance of students' involvement in curriculum development. The study highlighted the aspect of students' participation in the classroom but it did not relate to the significance of considering the students' feedback to review course objectives, materials as well as assessment practices which can increase students' accountability in the process of curriculum development. Al Nofali (as cited in Emenyeonu, 2012, p. 251) notes that in spite of initiatives of educational reform in Oman, most of these initiatives consist of 'implementing formative assessment methods such as class observations, student projects, short quizzes, self-assessment, and other useful methods.' This could be true for the current implemented EAP curriculum at the Colleges of Applied Sciences because the SCL approach is only integrated at the level of in-class activities along with students' formative assessment procedures and the teaching methodologies. With regards to the Omani context, teachers as well as students need to be actively involved in curriculum planning and evaluation process to ensure successful implementation of student centered learning.

3.7.3 Critical-Political Ideology

The critical-political ideology which is also referred to as the social reconstructionism is a powerful ideology which will contribute to our understanding of current priorities of higher education institutions in Oman and the underpinning ideologies affecting education in general and curriculum in particular. Mackernan's critical-political ideology is based on critical theory which is defined by Fuchs (2015) as a critical tradition which approaches societies by uncovering the effects of political economy and domination and their ideological agendas. Fuchs (2015) indicates that there are a number of theorists associated with critical theory such as Habermas and Karl Marx. Pennycook (1999) states that TESOL professionals should see the importance of critical theory not as a static body of knowledge but as an evolving social practice "always questioning, restively problematizing the given, being aware of the limits of their knowing, and bringing into being new schemas of politicisation" (p. 329). The current research investigation will also be informed by the critical approach since it does not only enable teaching professionals to increase their critical sensitivity to better understand the complexities of their educational contexts but also help them to seek ways to deal with these complexities. In addition to the study's major orientation to EAP curriculum challenges, it also highlights the central role attributed to teachers in the process of EAP curriculum development in the colleges. The critical-political ideology will not only help in formulating a critical understanding of the political ideologies which influence the discussion of EAP curriculum development, but will also emphasize the role of teachers in contributing to curriculum development. The critical-political ideology allows teachers to adopt a critical stance when speculating on their professional roles in the CAS context in which they are marginalized rather than being actively involved in developing the curriculum. Though the current study will be focused on highlighting teachers' roles in curriculum development, this does not exclude the significance of involving students in this educational process. Students will always be regarded as one of the basic elements of any curriculum development initiatives but the current study

is based on investigating the teachers' roles without which curriculum development is not possible.

The discussion of curriculum issues in the Omani educational system has always been dominated by the critical discourse in which many authors tended to demonstrate a sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo. In his critical approach, Al Toubi (1998) argued that curriculum in Oman has implemented a top-down model which leaves no space for teachers' involvement or innovative initiatives. As a fellow academic, the view proposed by Al Toubi (1998) in articulating his critical standpoint in relation to the implemented curriculum might be valid because educational institutions in Oman have been and still operating with an authoritative style.

Al Issa (2006, p. 229), who is a prominent critical educational writer in the Omani educational context, referenced how 'there is hence a pressing need to carefully scrutinize, analyze and understand the needs of the Omani learners and the perceptions and attitudes of the practicing educators and design a plan that would facilitate positive change.' Al Issa (2006) made a clear allusion to the importance of the 'needs' of the learners and the 'perceptions' of the practicing educators stressing any initiative towards changing the status quo has to take into consideration these two central elements. The current study incorporates these two significant aspects as central factors which are believed to shape the discussion of this research investigation in the following chapters.

Troudi (2006) detailed how a large number of ELT teachers are overworked in many parts of the world and they must adapt to the stress of job insecurity in their work environments. The circumstances of ELT teachers described by Troudi are parallel to the teaching circumstances in Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. Although this study does not aim to put teachers in a situation of struggle and conflict with the oppressive forces; it seeks to raise the awareness to which teachers' professional development can enhance the quality of any initiative towards curriculum development. In the context of teaching EAP in higher education institutions, Benesch (1993, p. 713) argued that the current trends of

most EAP courses is to accommodate to the existing traditional academic practices. Benesch believes that adopting such traditional academic practices can be problematic because they 'limit the participation of non-native speaking students in academic culture.' Benesch is critical of the prevailing traditional EAP orientation which she describes as an accommodationist ideology. This accommodationist ideology is concentrated to study and satisfy the demands of the content subject areas and to develop materials to make lectures and textbooks comprehensible and accessible. This particular ideology as discussed by Benesch is similar to the socio-economic ideology which is largely oriented towards the economic needs of the society. However, the accommodationist ideology contradicts the critical EAP ideology promoted by Benesch and can eventually lead to the marginalization of ESL teachers as well as students in academic institutions. The point which needs to be highlighted here with regards to the critical-political ideology embraced by the research study is that the notion of adopting a critical approach is quite significant in the context of teaching EAP in higher education. This form of critical-political awareness will help administrators and EAP teachers in the process of negotiating 'academic curricula responsive to urgent social, economic, and political issues, rather than serving one that is narrowly focused on career preparation' Boyer (as cited in Benesch, 1993, p. 714).

3.8 Curriculum Development in ELT

The previous section presented a discussion on some of the prevailing educational ideologies focusing on three major ideologies which are believed to have a great influence on the current research investigation. It is quite important to establish a clarification that when discussing models of curriculum development which are widely referred to in the literature as models of curriculum, there will always be a direct association to the overall philosophical orientations which guide and inform these models. Researchers suggest that the philosophical conceptions and ideologies provide the theoretical foundations of knowledge about curriculum whereas 'models function as representations of theory' (Mackernan, 2008, p. 56).

Each model is expected to stand as the author's rational representation of curriculum development on the basis of their underpinning philosophical orientations. The following discussion will attempt to create some links with the stated theoretical perspectives about curriculum in relation to understanding curriculum in the area of English language teaching.

3.9 Models of Curriculum Development in ELT

Most of the studies on curriculum especially those intended to discuss various theoretical and philosophical assumptions about language curriculum refer directly to the concept of curriculum development. In a number of fundamental books about curriculum, models of curriculum, curriculum design and curriculum development, the terms are used interchangeably. The conclusion which can be inferred from the relevant literature about curriculum studies is that the components of language curriculum design are not quite different from the components on which the process of curriculum development is formulated. For the purpose of this research study, various models of curriculum development and curriculum design will be investigated. The current study is primarily concerned with investigating an existing language programme at the Colleges of Applied Sciences which has its own syllabus, textbooks, teaching and learning resources and other materials. Moreover, the current study is oriented towards developing the existing EAP programme through investigating curriculum-based challenges which have been a barrier to the establishment of a successful curriculum development process.

3.9.1 Brown's Model of Curriculum Development

Brown (1995, p. 19) provides an explanation on how his model can be effective 'for the improvement and maintenance of already existing language programmes.' He suggests that his model helps in providing a more dynamic approach to the

process of curriculum development which allows for interactions among various elements of the model. Brown (1995, p. 20) introduced a model of curriculum which he referred to as (the Systematic Approach to Designing and Maintaining Language Curriculum). According to Brown (1995) the process of designing and developing a curriculum has to include needs analysis, objectives, testing, materials, teaching as well as evaluation which was represented in the model as an encompassing concept intended to relate to all the other components in the model.

3.9.2 Richard's Model of Curriculum Development

Richards (2001, p. 41) presented a model of curriculum development similar to Brown through which he sees that the elements of curriculum development must be perceived as constituting 'a network of interacting system' in which any change in one part of this network will consequently create effects on the other parts as well. The process of curriculum planning and implementation has to 'focus on needs analysis, situational analysis, planning learning outcomes, course organization, selecting and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching, and evaluation' (Richards, 2001, p. 41). Richard's model of curriculum development is more comprehensive than the one introduced by Brown as it incorporates more vital elements which weren't considered in Brown's model such as the situational analysis, planning learning outcomes and providing for effective teaching. Richard's model can be more informative to the kind of investigation intended by the current study. This is because it situates 'teachers and language teaching professionals at the center of the planning and decision-making process' which conforms to the orientation of this research in which teaching practitioners are believed to have a valuable contribution in the context of EAP curriculum development at the colleges.

3.9.3 A Model by Nation and Macalister

Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 1) presented a model of curriculum development which they referred to as 'A model of the parts of the curriculum design process.' Their model is formulated as representing three outside circles and a subdivided inner circle. The three outer circles (principles, environment, needs) incorporate practical and theoretical considerations which are perceived to be very influential in guiding and regulating the actual process of course design. Nation and Macalister (2010) intended to present their model to cover significant factors such as 'the learners' present knowledge, and lacks, the resources available including time, the skills of the teachers, the curriculum designer's strengths and limitations, and principles of teaching and learning.' Although these factors are not clearly stated inside the figure, they are meant to be implicitly inferred in the three sub-processes represented as environment analysis, needs analysis, and the application of the learning principles. From my vantage point, the authors should have explicated their representation of the curriculum design process through the presented (figure 3.1.) as it does not seem quite comprehensible from the first view and it may require more concentration on the part of the readers in order to reach the understanding intended by the authors. However, in their book, *Language Curriculum Design (2010)*, Nation and Macalister provided a detailed and elaborate analysis of all the constituent parts of the curriculum design process supported by examples.

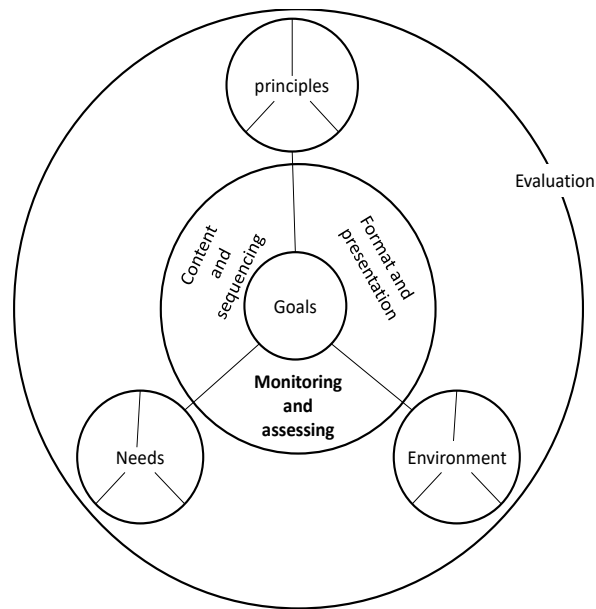


Figure 3.1. ‘A model of the parts of the curriculum design process’ (Nation & Macalister, 2010, p.3)

As demonstrated in figure 3.1., the course design process requires undertaking an environment analysis which should consider the ‘factors that will have a strong effect on decisions about the goals of the course, what to include in the course, and how to teach and assess it’ (Nation and Macalister, 2010, p. 14). Environmental factors can relate to the learners, the teachers, the teaching process and learning situation. The needs analysis element is focused on the examination of ‘what the learners know already and what they need to know’ (Nation and Macalister, 2010, p. 24). The element of principles which is introduced in the above figure relates to the principles which consider the nature of language, the nature of learning, and the role of culture. As shown in figure 3.1., the outer circles and inner circles represent the syllabus. The inner circle of the curriculum design has goals as its center highlighting the importance of having clear goals for any language course. There are three more elements which are represented as parts of the inner circles which are explained as follow:

- **Content and sequencing:** refers to the items covered in a course of study and organized according to an agreed sequence.

- **Format and Presentation:** relates to the various techniques and activities incorporated in the students' learning process which is guided by the teachers.
- **Monitoring and Assessment:** is presented to denote to the process of evaluating and 'observing learning, testing the results of learning, and providing feedback to the learners about their progress' (Nation and Macalister, 2010, p. 2).

In addition to the inner circles discussed previously, there is a larger circle which demarcates the curriculum design process. This larger circle represents evaluation which is represented as an overall process aimed at the assessment of all the other aspects of the curriculum design process included within the larger outer circle.

3.9.4 Reflecting on the Presented Models of Curriculum Development

Richard's model of curriculum development and the model of curriculum design process introduced by Nation and Macalister are quite informative to the investigation of the current research. The following discussion will focus on analyzing the two models by relating them to the current research, highlighting to what extent they can be adopted to inform the exploration of the main aims of the study.

The curriculum development model introduced by Richards (2001, p. 41) is based on a number of interactive processes which are 'needs analysis, situational analysis, planning learning outcomes, course organization, selecting and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching, and evaluation.' The element of needs analysis is important in Richard's model of curriculum and was highlighted as an integral element in the model presented by Nation and Macalister. In the context of the current research, the discussion on needs analysis is necessary considering that analyzing the learners' needs has to be aligned to the underlying principles of teaching and learning in the college. One of

the issues of curriculum encountered at the colleges is that the existing curriculum was not based on a systematic needs assessment which requires paying this particular curriculum element a considerable amount of attention by administrators, professional practitioners and teachers. Another reason why Richard's model seems to be crucial to our understanding of curriculum issues at the colleges is that it places a high importance on the element of 'situational analysis' or what is referred to by Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 93) as the 'environment analysis'. This element of 'situational analysis' introduced by Richards stresses the importance of investigating the impact of social factors on the process of language teaching. This sort of societal analysis should aim to uncover the impact of certain influential groups in the target community. These groups include policy makers in government, educational and other government officials, employers, the business community, politicians, tertiary education specialists, educational organizations, parents, citizens and students.

The situation analysis stage is seen as a complementary stage to needs analysis which is conducted to assess the potential impact of 'political, social, economic, or institutional' factors on the process of curriculum development (Richards, 2001, p. 91). There is a kind of conformity which can be noted here between the situation analysis described by Richards and the socio-economic ideology which was discussed earlier in this chapter. Careful consideration of the political and socio-economic needs of the society should be the underlying principal and orientation of successful development projects. Richard's element of societal analysis has also underlined the significance of other factors such as project factors, institutional factors, teacher factors as well as learner factors. Richard's model provided a comprehensive explanation of all the relevant factors that can be studied under societal analysis. The practitioners who are being assigned to carry out the project of curriculum development, the prevailing culture of the institution, teacher training needs as well as learners' backgrounds represent highly important aspects of the societal analysis intended by Richard's model.

This particular element of societal analysis should receive more focus as it does not only conform to the guiding principles of our colleges but also provides a great deal of investigation on the teacher-training needs which ultimately contributes to the process of curriculum development intended by the current study. Richards (2001, p. 99) stated how the teacher factor, necessitates that more emphasis should be directed towards the following dimensions:

- Language proficiency
- Teaching experience
- Skill and expertise
- Training and qualifications
- Morale and motivation
- Teaching style
- Beliefs and principles

Another set of factors highlighted by Richards are referred to as the 'adoption factors' which require that any project of curriculum development 'must take into account the relative ease or difficulty of introducing change into the system' (Richards, 2001, p. 103). This allusion to the adoption factors is very relevant to the context of this research particularly because teaching practitioners of EAP courses in the college belong to different cultural and educational backgrounds with a wide range of pedagogical values and perceptions. Teachers' perceptions are seen as an important factor in the current study with respect to the kind of curriculum development project they may propose to solve the existing curricular issues at the colleges.

Another element in Richard's model indicates that quality teaching is not only achieved as a consequence of how teachers employ their teaching methodology 'but through creating contexts and work environments that can facilitate good teaching.' The major themes concerning this particular aspect of Richard's model are associated to enhancing the quality of teaching. We will focus on two important aspects which have proven to be significant in providing a better understanding to

the current research context. These two aspects are; the professional treatment of teachers and the opportunities for teacher development. The current research is formulated on the belief of allowing teachers the opportunity to express their opinions on curriculum issues and providing them with more chances to develop their professional skills which can positively contribute to the EAP curriculum development at CAS colleges. Therefore, the following sections are intended to highlight the significance of two relevant elements in Richard's model which will be further investigated in the following discussion.

3.9.4.1 Professional Treatment of Teachers

Language teachers can be confronted with poor employment conditions and the condition of ESL teachers in the Gulf is no exception. In the context of CAS colleges, most of the EAP teachers are contracted by agencies on a short-term basis which minimizes the chances of initiating curriculum development that requires stability and job security to guarantee full staff involvement in the institution. Eskey (as cited in Richards, 2001) commented on this particular issue in relation to the American Universities:

Most are required to be self-supporting and many are frankly regarded as cash cows that are expected to generate large surpluses for the support of more prestigious programmes...This means maximizing income and minimizing costs, which in practice means radical understaffing, low salaries for both staff and faculty, large numbers of part-time faculty with few or no benefits, and major corner-cutting with respect to equipment, facilities, and faculty such as support for curriculum development, in-service training, and attending professional conferences.

The issues referred to by Eskey are not different from the kind of teaching circumstances faced by ESL teachers in CAS colleges. I think we seem to have an

issue with the professional treatment of EAP teachers at our institutions and this issue could be more apparent in the case of contracted expatriate teachers who experience a sense of job insecurity which prevent them from expressing their feedback about curriculum based issues. Syed (2003, p. 339) alluded to the issue of differential treatment under which contracted expatriate teachers become 'less motivated to critique existing systems' because they don't want to lose their jobs. In the context of the current study at CAS colleges, local teachers don't experience this challenge because unlike expatriate teachers, they have permanent employment contracts. These working conditions which are most likely to be faced by expatriate teachers at CAS colleges can be seen as a barrier to curriculum development.

3.9.4.2 Opportunities for Teacher Development

As discussed earlier, to ensure a successful implementation of the curriculum development process Richard (2001) also highlights that the provision of professional development can consequently enhance the development of the curriculum. On the importance of providing opportunities for teacher development for ESL/EFL teachers in educational institutions, Richards (2001, p. 206) emphasizes that 'a quality institution provides opportunities for teachers to develop their careers.' According to Shaw (1997), the field of ESL/EFL in higher education institutions is exposed to rapid changes and transformations under which teaching practitioners need continuous opportunities to update and develop their teaching capacities and professional knowledge. Richards (2001, p. 206) stated that such opportunities can be provided for teachers in a number of ways:

- Conference participations
- Workshops and in-service seminars
- Reading groups
- Peer observation
- Writing about teaching

- Project work
- Action research

Higher education institutions in Oman should consider the value attributed to the provision of professional development opportunities in their developmental plans of human resources for both local and expatriate teachers who constitute a large number of the teaching professionals in higher education. Thus, governments should realize that there is a need 'to shift to the qualitative development of teachers who can better serve changing students needs' (Syed, 2003, p. 339).

3.9.5 A Multi-Model Approach to Curriculum Development

As discussed earlier, the research which approaches the domain of EAP curriculum development in Colleges of Applied Sciences is informed by two central models of curriculum development. Richard's model of curriculum development and the model of the curriculum design process presented by Nation and Macalister are seen as complementary to each other. Richard's model provides a comprehensive assessment for curriculum elements focusing on teachers' central contribution in the process of curriculum development locating them 'at the center of the planning and decision-making process' (Richards, 2001, p. 42). This model is expected to generate a better understanding on curriculum challenges encountered by EAP teachers in CAS colleges. Richard's model is highly important as it also places more value on the professional treatment of teachers and opportunities for teacher development. The model introduced by Nation and Macalister (2010) builds on our understanding of issues related to curriculum development in the context of the current research adopting a more learner-centered approach. A lot of discussions provided by Nation and Macalister justify the rationale of their model which indicates their preoccupation with the concepts of 'negotiated needs' and the 'learner autonomy' signifying that their overall guiding principal is purely student oriented. Integrating a multi-model approach based on the two models represented earlier is expected to refine our understanding of the

investigated curriculum issues and suggests a set of informed mechanisms to solve some of the EAP curriculum issues confronted by teachers across the CAS colleges.

3.9.6 Role of Teachers in Curriculum Development

Before starting the discussion on empirical studies which are intended to expose different approaches to curriculum development, there will be a brief description of curriculum development in Oman. In his study which utilized the method of document analysis Al Jardani (2012) stated that curriculum reform initiatives in ELT in Oman were started by the Ministry of Education which was concerned with the implementation of changes through the creation of a new curriculum and revising the existing curriculum. The main issue with most of these initiatives is that they were restricted to one aspect of curriculum rather than viewing curriculum in its entirety. Al Jardani (2012, p. 43) alluded to another issue explaining, 'As the principles underlying the approach represented in any textbook or other educational reform initiative may be novel to the end users (classroom teachers and learners), problems can arise if there is a lack of explanation, orientation or a lack of effective curriculum evaluation process.' An important inference which can be retrieved from this discussion is that ELT reform initiatives intended by the Ministry of Education to renovate and develop the curriculum are characterized by their limitation to textbooks and materials and are being based on a top-down model under which teachers are isolated from producing professional input in this unsystematic process.

There is a strong argument based on the belief of how teachers can make great contributions to curriculum and that their role must not be limited to the implementation of curriculum. One of the pertinent empirical studies conducted by Li (2010) focused on interviewing EFL teachers to further examine their awareness on existing language policies in various primary and secondary schools in a province in China. Li (2010) explores the perceived relationship between the

English language policy and its implementation at the local level in Chinese schools according to the perceptions of in-service EFL teachers. The language planning process in China involves curriculum policies which are marked by their top-down approach in which teachers are only envisaged as implementers of the stipulated language policies. Based on the study, the results revealed that the teachers who participated in this research wanted to be involved in the policy making process in relation to curriculum design, constructing and selecting teaching materials and methodology. Li's study suggests that similar empirical studies could be undertaken in other EFL/ESL contexts under which teachers are exposed to similar circumstances to explore their attitudes regarding the roles they want to play in the process of curriculum development. Considering the context of the current research in which a top-down approach to curriculum is adopted, involving teachers in the decision-making process concerning curriculum planning and design can maximize the effectiveness of their contribution in any initiative intended for curriculum innovation and development.

Another study conducted by Troudi, Combe & Al-Hamly (2009) delineated the effects of the top-down approach in a different EFL language teaching context concerning teachers' roles in student assessment in the UAE and Kuwait. The study which was based on teachers' oriented open-ended questionnaire discovered that EAP programmes adopt a structural and hierarchical approach with regards to assessment planning and implementation. This study pointed out that the duties of developing testing tools and assessment decisions are handled by level-coordinators because teachers are perceived as lacking experience in this particular area. This issue of excluding EAP teachers from assessment related decision-making processes hinders any initiative aimed at curriculum development. This is because a curriculum should be 'open to the professional judgment of teachers and support the development of their capacities for judgement' (Elliott, 1994, p. 67).

EL-Okda (2005, p. 33) proposes a model which allows for more EFL teacher involvement in on-going curriculum development in the Omani educational context.

He indicates that curriculum development in almost all Arab countries is based on a top-down model in which teachers' contribution is restricted to the 'implementation of pre-designed packages of teaching materials.' Based on his knowledge of the Omani context in which employing a top-down model to curriculum development has been the norm, he proposes a model in which top-down and bottom-up strategies are allowed to coexist. El-Okda (2005) stressed the significance of the School-Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) because it is based on the rationale that 'curriculum development and teacher professional growth are inseparable' which is a central theme in the current study (El-Okda, 2005, p. 37). Though the model proposed by El-Okda seems to be relevant to the current research investigation, there are a number of aspects which must be considered. However, the emergence of a parallel bottom-up model which can co-exist with the dominant top-down model in the colleges can give rise to some unexpected issues. This is because even the School-Based curriculum development activities which may be initiated by the collaborative efforts of teachers will need to be encouraged and allowed to survive under the dominant existing top-down approach.

The professional growth which is expected to be revived with the model proposed by El-Okda (2005, p. 39) requires the emergence of collaborative and multi-faceted initiatives through what he referred to as 'professional growth networks'. These professional networks can be encouraged by heads of English departments among EAP teachers across the colleges which can allow teachers' engagement in curriculum development. It is important to mention that the implementation of this model calls for a process of re-defining the existing roles of HODs and level-coordinators at the colleges to promote the understanding of teachers' valuable contribution in curriculum development. It is through this stage to which the concept of re-defining roles that 'professional growth' intended by El-Okda can be successfully facilitated.

Shawer (2009) conducted a qualitative case study as an idiographic research strategy at Washington State University which was aimed at exploring teacher curriculum approaches which were believed to have a direct influence on class-

room level curriculum development. Through the use of a multi-methods research which involved semi-structured interviews and participant observations, the study revealed that EFL teachers who participated in the study can be categorized to represent three various approaches to curriculum. The first category of (the curriculum-developers) was largely involved in macro and micro-curriculum development strategies. This group of teachers depended on supplementation and adaptation strategies through 'thinking about students on planning lessons and the materials and activities that can suit the students' (Shawer, 2009, p. 177). The second category represented (the curriculum-makers) who started their teaching with a needs assessment process to search for suitable curriculum topics in consultation with their students and were allowed more freedom in comparison to the first category. This is because, in addition to the adaptation and supplementation procedures in which they were involved, the groups of teachers 'were actively involving their students in the emerging curriculum' (Shawer, 2009, p. 180). The last category represented the teachers who were categorized as (the curriculum-transmitters) since they adhered to the content of the textbooks in their teaching and they relied heavily on the pedagogic instructions of the teacher's guide. Shawer (2009) concluded that curriculum-developers and curriculum-makers were actively involved in an ongoing process of adapting the prescribed curriculum to their contexts.

The discussion regarding these three curriculum typologies provided by Shawer (2009) is very relevant to the current research. Understanding the current approaches adopted by EAP teachers at the CAS colleges is central to our understanding about the existing curriculum issues. Although Shawer's discussion focused much attention on the methodological approaches of teachers, this particular element can have a great influence on the process of teaching and learning. Despite that the prevailing methodology of most teachers falls within 'the curriculum-transmitters' which conforms to the overall educational orientation of the colleges, a number of teachers continue to explore the merits of other curriculum approaches which can contribute in guiding the practitioners' efforts to deal with the current curriculum challenges.

The intention of this section is to highlight some of the current approaches implemented by various educational institutions with respect to curriculum development in English language teaching. The following section will be devoted to the discussion about English for Academic Purposes focusing on central issues and debates that characterize the EAP context. The section will also consider the discussion about empirical studies conducted in the context of EAP to provide a comprehensive critical analysis about issues as they relate to the current EAP practices around the world.

3.10 English for Academic Purposes

The interest in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has rapidly evolved due to the increase of university level educational programmes in many countries around the world. This has led to increasing the number of international students enrolled in tertiary courses in English. The enormous interest with EAP justifies how 'EAP is now situated at the front line of theory development and innovative practice in English as a second/other language' (Hyland, 2006, p.1).

Hyland (2006, p. 1) provided a comprehensive definition for EAP stating that EAP stands for teaching English with the aim of assessing learners in order to prepare them for various academic disciplines they are expected to study in tertiary level. In Hyland's definition of EAP, there is a reference to some relevant areas which he related to the understanding of EAP. These relevant areas are as follows:

- Pre-tertiary, undergraduate and post-graduate teaching (including designing materials, lectures, and classroom tasks).
- Classroom interactions (including teacher feedback, tutorials and seminar discussions).
- Research genres (including journal articles, conference papers and grant proposals).
- Student writing (including essays, exam papers and graduate theses)

- Administrative practice (including course documents and doctoral oral defenses)

These aspects which are referenced by Hyland (2006) can be characterized as practical in nature and are more associated with the actual teaching of EAP. According to Hyland (2006) it is essential to stress that EAP is a theoretically grounded field which encompasses areas such as syllabus design, needs analysis and materials development.

Hyland (2006, p. 2) indicated that EAP involves more than improving the communicative proficiency required of students in various academic disciplines. The main objective of teaching EAP is to ‘employ a range of interdisciplinary influences for its research methods, theories and practices to provide insights into the structures and meanings of spoken, written, visual and electronic academic texts, into the demands placed by academic contexts on communicative behaviors, and into the pedagogic practices by which these behaviors can be developed.’ This particular statement suggested by Hyland implies some of the relevant issues this study aims to investigate especially in terms of syllabus design, assessment and teaching which essentially represent the most problematic elements of the EAP curriculum at CAS colleges

3.10.1 EAP or ESP

There is a clear distinction between the approach of EAP and ESP as discussed in the pertinent EAP literature. Hyland and Ham-lyons (2002) clarified the distinction between EAP and ESP by indicating that EAP is different from courses devoted to teaching English for general purposes and is also quite different from teaching English for occupational purposes which is widely known as ESP (English for Specific Purposes). However, the distinction between EAP and ESP seems to be lacking in a number of higher educational institutions including CAS colleges in which the current research is being conducted. Hyland and Ham-lyons (2002) explain how EAP is similar to ESP because both fields require needs analysis to

identify the specific skills which a particular group of learners need to acquire whereas EAP should be concerned with a set of common core universal skills or language forms. There is a clear indication in the arguments presented by Hyland and Ham-lyons (2002) that a partnership must be formulated between EAP teachers and teachers from content departments which will assist EAP courses to satisfy the linguistic and academic needs and priorities required by the distinctive discourse of various academic disciplines taught at college or university level.

Flowerdew & Peacock (2001, p. 8) indicate that EAP courses have a different dimension than ESP or EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) courses. They explain that the function of EAP courses is to prepare students at a university or college level with their studies whereas ESP or EOP courses have a more vocationally oriented dimension which is 'directed towards professional preparation.' In their discussion about EAP and EOP, Flowerdew & Peacock state that an English course which is aimed at helping the students read economics textbooks would be EAP oriented whereas a course designed to teach students how to handle business meetings or how to take phone calls will be EOP oriented.

On the importance of establishing collaboration between EAP practitioners and subject specialists, Flowerdew & Peacock (2001) refer to the approach of 'team-teaching experiment' which was used in a study conducted by Flowerdew (1993) at Sultan Qaboos University. He describes the study being based on the foundation year science course and the science support English course which were collaboratively taught by science and language teachers. This sort of collaboration resulted in the editing of teaching materials and the production of new materials to be used in both the science and English classes.

There are other methods suggested by Flowerdew & Peacock (2001) to work with subject specialists such as 'the subject-specialist informant method' and 'the consultative method'. The subject-specialist informant method requires the subject specialist to provide feedback on the content and the organization of texts while

the consultative method reduces the role of subject-specialist to act more as a consultant rather than actual collaborator in the design of EAP courses. The subject specialist 'may suggest topics for projects, give lectures, assist in the assessment of students' work, and run discussions, among a whole range of activities' (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p. 16).

3.10.2 Understanding Major Issues in EAP

The field of EAP is multifaceted which is further complicated by the rapid expansion of EAP courses around the world. There are a number of issues which influence the research and practice of EAP for which this particular section is aimed to provide further explanation. These central issues will be discussed below according to their importance to the current investigation.

3.10.2.1 The Non-Native EAP Practitioners

Hyland (2006, p. 3) articulated the concern related to 'the English-language skills of non-native English speaking academics working in non-English countries where English is used as the medium of instruction in higher education contexts around the world. It was suggested by Hyland (2006) that NNS/EAP teachers are presented with the challenge of updating their professional knowledge which requires more than the delivery of lectures and performing some course related administrative work. The EAP practitioners in contexts similar to the context investigated throughout this research study are expected to participate in international conferences, conduct and publish research in English which are seen as integral factors which can promote the EAP practitioners' competencies in higher education institutions. Referring to the context of the colleges, it is essential to point out that the existing EAP programmes need to be analyzed to enhance their capacity to cater for the global demands of EAP in an international educational community. With the absence of a systematic pre-service and in-service plan of professional development for EAP teachers at the colleges, solving

curriculum issues and establishing a continuous process of curriculum development can't be attainable. Flowerdew & Peacock (2001, p. 23) provided a strong argument to indicate how critical the ramifications of the NNs issue could be. They discussed an obvious imbalance with respect to research and practice of EAP as the current situation 'is one in which most of the EAP literature is written by NSs, but most of the EAP teaching is done by NNSs.' This particular argument gives the impression of Native-speaker dominance in terms of research production in the EAP field, whereas in the reality of the current research context things are quite different. Despite that Omani NNSs who teach EAP courses have better educational qualifications in TESOL compared to their Nss counterparts, all the EAP practitioners need to undergo a series of professional development workshops to increase the quality of teaching EAP courses at the colleges.

3.10.2.2 The Common Core Hypothesis

One of the challenges associated with the design of EAP courses concerns the level of specificity of the implemented courses. Proponents of 'the common core hypothesis' are of the belief that 'at the lower levels of general English competence, learners are not ready for discipline-specific language and learning tasks' while opponents of this hypothesis argue that the ideal cost-effective teaching is that which concentrates on the specific needs of the students which are geared towards the vocational rather than the academic orientation (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p. 16).

Referring to the issue of the common core hypothesis is quite important to our understanding of the EAP curriculum challenges at the CAS colleges. The 'narrow vs. wide-angle perspectives' indicated by Flowerdew & Peacock has spread to the point in which it has also been used to solve problems with the EAP curriculum. The majority of EAP teachers attribute the current EAP curriculum issues to the prevalent 'common-core hypothesis' adopted in the design of EAP courses across

the colleges; nonetheless, I believe that the system isn't prepared yet to adopt the narrow-angle perspective. One of the appropriate solutions introduced by Flowerdew & Peacock (2001) is the attempt to integrate the two approaches rather than dealing with them as two extremes. EAP curriculum planners and administrators should focus on the orientation of mastering the common core skills in addition to incorporating the discipline-specific activities. This remedial plan can help in pursuing curriculum development initiatives in both orientations considering the current circumstances of the EAP courses at the colleges.

3.10.2.3 The 'What' and the 'How' in EAP

In the context of EAP instruction, one relevant area which requires attention is the distinction between the 'What' and the 'How'. In order to further explain these two orientations, Todd (2003) denoted that there has been more emphasis on the content of teaching rather than the methodology adopted by teachers in the area of EAP. In his discussion, Todd (2003) explained that the 'What' of EAP has been the major concern of EAP practitioners in the design of the courses which is informed by needs analysis and research findings on the nature of academic communication. The issue referred to by Todd (2003) relates to the context of EAP teaching at the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman where the emphasis is directed to the 'What' of EAP exceeds the emphasis on the teachers' methodological and pedagogical approaches. It has been noted that most discussions and meetings devoted to seek solutions to the EAP curriculum challenges were focused on the 'What' of EAP contained in textbooks, materials and assessment while much less attention was given to the element of methodology.

Todd (2003) highlighted that the methodology required by EAP teachers is distinct from the requirements of general purpose English teachers in its content. He explained that whereas the methodologies of the two can be quite interrelated, the approach of team teaching which is distinctive of EAP implies different

methodologies. The point to be considered is that providing more understanding 'about how EAP is taught and learnt would provide useful directions for EAP teacher training' (Todd, 2003, p. 149). The need for clarity about the 'How' of EAP is even greater in periphery countries such as Oman in which EAP teachers need specialized training in this educational enterprise.

3.10.3 Contrasting Perspectives about the EAP Textbook Syllabus

Various arguments have been presented in the EAP literature on the use of EAP commercial textbooks. The following discussion is intended to delineate some of the major debates which are relevant to the issues investigated in the current research in relation to the use of EAP textbooks.

3.10.3.1 The Anti-Textbook View

The anti-textbook view was discussed by Harwood (2005) who questions the dependence on commercial materials. The issue which holds some relevance to the context of the current study is EAP teachers' reliance on the textbooks as a primary element of curriculum. EAP teachers regard textbooks as documents of 'sanctioned knowledge' which creates a number of challenges one of which is limiting teachers' creativity and contribution to the transference of knowledge contained in the textbooks (Harwood, 2005, p. 151).

Another important point discussed by Harwood (2005) which is evident in the context of the study is how implemented textbooks have been commercially produced and are not based on genuine classroom experiences. This particular point was highlighted by Hyland (2006) who argues that many EAP textbooks depend highly on authors' intuition and experience, rather than informed systematic research. Though, the case of using commercially produced textbooks is not limited to the colleges considering that many higher education institutions

around the world follow suit on this regard, initiating a process of curriculum development requires further investigation into this matter.

An interesting argument presented by Harwood (2005, p.152) alludes that the issue of textbook publishing companies is even more complicated than it might seem to be. The main concern of almost all the publishing companies nowadays is 'marketability rather than the pedagogical effectiveness' which requires a more thorough investigation by higher education institutions that are using commercially produced textbooks.

3.10.3.2 The Pro-Textbook View

Harwood (2005, p. 152) referred to the pro-textbook view which sees the merits of using commercially produced textbooks. The proponents of this view claim that textbooks can be used as 'bridges' to stimulate their thinking and to provide their students with the most appropriate classes. This view considers commercial materials to be more organized compared to teachers' photocopies, because they are 'based around systematic, balanced syllabuses.' The merit which is suggested by this view is that commercial textbooks are based on systematic syllabuses which provide a clear structure for both teachers and students. Despite the claims of the anti-textbook camp, Harwood (2005, p. 153) says that teachers cannot simply refuse to adopt textbooks because this will increase their workload and they will end up 'reinventing the wheel' when textbook writers have already performed the job for them. Harwood (2005) shows how even though there are many who believe in the anti-textbook argument, textbooks remain important because they continue to help teachers develop particularly when they are appropriately research-led and contain what they should.

3.11 Curriculum Development in EAP

In the previous discussion, a section was devoted to the approach of three important models of curriculum development in English language teaching. The models of curriculum development presented by Brown (1995), Richards (2001), and Nation and Macalister (2010) have proven to be essential to our understanding of curriculum challenges in the context of teaching EAP at the colleges. However, this section though does not intend to provide a new model for speculation; instead, it attempts to highlight elements of curriculum development which can be relevant to EAP courses in light of current issues pertaining to EAP curriculum in the current study. The intention of the study is focused on expanding the understanding and scope of knowledge of the existing deficiencies in the current EAP programme implemented at the colleges. The following sections will provide further discussion about the existing curriculum and syllabus, the materials in use, the teacher population, the learners as well as the resources of the programme by relating to some influential views from the literature.

3.11.1 The Existing Syllabus

Breen (2001) discusses that the syllabus represents the content of a course of study which is selected to be compatible with the overall aims. Breen's view of what a syllabus is alludes to the interconnectedness between the syllabus and the course aims and objectives which in many cases are being determined by educational institutions. In the context of teaching EAP courses at the colleges, syllabi and course outlines were produced by external educational providers and have been used and implemented without being exposed to any process of review or scrutiny. It is essential to allude to the importance of investigating the existing syllabi of EAP courses to assure that cohesiveness does exist between the materials and examinations so that the syllabi can clearly guide both teachers and students. This process of examining the syllabi of EAP should be undertaken in

light of the philosophical educational orientation of the colleges as a higher education institution.

The word 'syllabus' which is discussed widely in the literature pertaining to curriculum and course design may be referred to in educational settings using different terms such as 'course plan', 'course outline' or other terms. In the context of the colleges, the syllabus is known as 'course specifications' and is used as an educational document providing the most important information on the EAP courses. EAP Year 1 and Year 2 course specifications demonstrate an overview of the course, course objectives, learning outcomes, teaching and learning methods as well as providing information about assessment procedures. The course specification document of EAP courses in CAS colleges is formulated on the basis of combining the functional and the task-based syllabus which were discussed by Breen (2001). This organizational structure of the course specifications' document is based on textbooks which are used in EAP courses emphasizing the specific skills and competences students are expected to cover in each academic skill. This form of classification tends to be relevant to the discussion provided by Christison and Murray (2014, p. 13) in the 'Academic Language Functions'. They explain how academic language functions 'are the specific tasks, purposes, or uses of language in academic environments.' According to Christison and Murray (2014, p. 13) academic language functions 'include comparing, classifying, analyzing, persuading, synthesizing, and evaluating.' These academic functions represent the central academic competences which are targeted by the various language skills in the course specifications' document of EAP courses at CAS colleges.

3.11.2 The Materials is Use

As stated previously in chapter two, in EAP courses at CAS a selection of commercially produced textbooks are used. Despite that many EAP programmes use commercially published materials, very little seems to be done with regards to

evaluating the implemented materials. Harwood (2010) highlights the importance of 'producing materials on a local rather than a global level, connecting them meaningfully with the context and with the learners' own lives. It was further discussed by Charles & Pecorari (2016) how the evaluation process should consider the needs and the requirements of all the parties involved with the materials and not only teachers and students. The evaluation process should include other parties at institutional and societal levels to ensure the suitability and the effectiveness of the materials.

3.11.3 The Teachers

Models of curriculum development which were previously discussed in this chapter highlight the importance of teachers' involvement in curriculum design and development. Many educational institutions fail to realize the significant role of teachers in developing the curriculum because they are influenced by the implementation view of curriculum. Graves (2014) explains that this implementation view of curriculum which sees curriculum as a plan to be implemented has not only limited teachers' participation in curriculum related decision making but has also negatively affected the process of curriculum development. A very important point alluded to by Graves is that teachers need to be professionally developed in order to contribute to the curriculum. So, this means that the gap between curriculum development and professional development needs to be bridged which is currently seen as a barrier to the development of EAP courses in the CAS context. To deal with this issue Graves (2014, p. 61) suggests that teachers should learn to "think curricularly" which requires them to become knowledgeable and instrumental in areas of curriculum development and educational innovation which can be allowed through providing proper teacher training programmes.

On the importance of the teacher training approach to the current study and its influence on the process of curriculum development, this chapter will devote a

section to the interrelatedness between curriculum development and professional development.

3.11.4 The Learners

The role of learners was largely discussed in the curriculum development literature stressing that they should be highly involved as responsible participants in the educational process. Allwright and Hanks (2009) propose their view that the learners' role can be seen as importantly parallel to the role of the teachers. The term 'developing practitioners' which Allwright and Hanks (2009) tend to use to refer to the learners signifies the importance of viewing them as key participants whose educational experiences and thoughts about curriculum should be considered to ensure the efficiency of the learning process.

The EAP course syllabus at CAS colleges allows the students the freedom to choose a topic for their writing project and this element of selecting a topic on the basis of their individual preferences has been a central aspect of the continuous assessment schemes of EAP courses at the colleges. However, there seems to be no input from students or teachers regarding the EAP implemented curriculum.

In relation to the learners' involvement in curriculum related decision making, Breen and Littlejohn (2000) provide a comprehensive discussion about the significance of negotiating with students in language classrooms. Breen and Littlejohn (2000) referred to six principles underlying the use of negotiation in the language classroom. In their view, negotiation is seen as the means through which learners can be responsible members in the classroom and they can construct and reflect on their own learning as an emancipatory process. It is through negotiation that students can utilize the social and cultural resources of the classroom context and they can also be allowed to exercise their active agency in the learning process. Negotiation can't only 'enrich the classroom discourse' but it can also 'inform and extend a teacher's pedagogic strategies' (Breen & Littlejohn, p. 20).

3.11.5 Needs Analysis

Another perspective which seems to be associated with our discussion about the learners in the context of EAP courses is the awareness of the learners' needs, which is regarded as 'the central element of EAP course design' (Hyland, 2006, p. 73). The needs analysis as described by Hyland (2006) is meant to be a continuous process directed to the students, for the sake of maximizing the effectiveness of a course of study. He believes that the needs analysis process should be seen as a comprehensive process which takes into account many aspects such as 'incorporating learners' goals and backgrounds, their language proficiencies, their reasons for taking the course, their teaching and learning preferences, and the situations they will need to communicate in' (Hyland, 2006, p. 73).

There has been frequent emphasis in the EAP literature on the significance of conducting needs analysis as a central stage in the area of EAP course design and curriculum development. On the importance of needs analysis it has been clearly indicated that 'the learner-centered approach to language learning builds on the premise that teaching/learning programmes should be responsive to learners' needs as suggested by Hutchinson & Waters (as cited in, Eslami, 2010, p. 3). Eslami (2010) further explains how EAP curriculum development can be successful after undertaking a comprehensive assessment of learners' linguistic background, preferred learning strategies and most importantly their functional needs in the target language. He also pointed out that the needs analysis should be compatible to overall course objectives which stipulate the overall educational ideology of the institution in which EAP courses are being provided. Eslami conducted a study which was aimed at investigating the perceptions of EAP teachers and students on the problematic areas in EAP programmes in the Iranian higher education context. Approximately 693 EAP students from various academic departments and 37 teachers participated in the study. After analyzing the data of

the administered survey, an urgent need was required to increase the students' general proficiency in English. The students' low language proficiency in English was attributed to 'limited vocabulary, slow reading speed, poor listening, speaking, writing and reading comprehension, boring classes, access to the internet, and lack of instructors' emphasis on the use of the internet' (Eslami, 2010, p. 7). He concluded his study by relating to the areas which have been considered problematic by the students in the context of EAP but there was insufficient information in the results to expose the perceptions of EAP teachers regarding curriculum issues. Though his study reveals some important recommendations which could be considered in the area of EAP course design; it does not yield sufficient analysis on the EAP problematic issues investigated in the study.

In a higher education ELT context similar to the context investigated by the current study, Al-Husseini (2004) conducted a study to analyze the language needs of the students at the Colleges of Technology in Oman, specifically in the foundation programme and technical studies. His study though is limited to an analysis of the language needs of students in the foundation programme which has a different orientation from our EAP programme at the colleges; it reveals very significant findings on the issue of needs analysis in Oman. Al-Husseini (2004) discovered an existing discrepancy between the current practice in the foundation programme and the actual needs of the learners in technical studies. He referred to the significance of identifying the language needs of the learners among various academic specializations relating to the importance of determining a set of core/key language/learning skills for all technical departments at the college. This particular study can be informative to the current research investigation in its approach to needs analysis for improving the current courses at the colleges and maximizing their efficiency in teaching and learning. A similar approach can be adopted to identify the academic needs of students rather than the purely linguistic needs in order to ensure students possess the required 'common core Academic English skills' which are necessary in comprehending the academic input of their disciplinary subject courses.

On the importance of needs analysis in EAP course design, Dunworth (2008) conducted an empirical study aimed at identifying the range of tasks undertaken by novice undergraduate students which can provide EAP practitioners with rich data to design programmes. The study took place in an Australian university and relied on the analysis of primary resources represented in a set of compulsory tasks which were thoroughly assessed. These tasks are encouraged for students within the first semester of undergraduate study. The main source of data was retrieved through the analysis of course documents. Though the study was based on a single campus; it generated rich data and reliable results from the course documents which covered all the disciplinary areas of the academic departments at the university. The findings of the study showed that developing an awareness of the practical demands expected of students after graduation can become a reliable source of data for EAP practitioners and course designers. Dunworth (2008, p. 321) argued that 'EAP syllabus should prioritize those tasks which course participants are most likely to encounter.' The perspective implied in this empirical study is quite significant and touches upon one of the central issues related to the current study. EAP teachers need to develop an awareness of the assessed verbal and written tasks and projects required of students in their disciplinary courses. This awareness will help the EAP practitioners to develop the EAP curriculum at the colleges through formulating an academic alignment between EAP courses and other courses provided in various academic departments. This kind of alignment will not only enhance the EAP curriculum development at the CAS colleges but will also facilitate students' acquisition of disciplinary content knowledge.

There are a large number of studies oriented to the discussion on the importance of needs analysis in EAP contexts. Yurekli (2012) presents a similar perspective to that explained by Dunworth (2008). Yurekil conducted a study to investigate the stages of a curriculum renewal process of an EAP programme in a higher education institution in Turkey. The study was based on the results of a needs analysis project which involved 1005 freshman students, 17 freshman EAP course instructors, and 35 department teachers. After the needs analysis stage which was

the initial source of data collection in the study, and the results obtained from the semi-structured interviews with subject teachers, 'the curriculum was renewed, objectives revised and an approach identified' (Yurekli, 2012, p. 63). The study of Yurekli (2012) seems to yield powerful results because it was not only limited to the analysis of course documents as a primary source of data but rather retrieved genuine knowledge of teachers whose perceptions constitute an accurate representation of the reality.

3.12 Curriculum Development and Professional Development

If we tend to speculate on the way the phenomenon of curriculum development and professional development were defined and analyzed throughout the previous discussions of this chapter, we can see that these two concepts are inseparable. It is important to stress that the current research is founded on the belief of teachers as central players in the process of curriculum development and therefore providing equal chances for teachers to develop their professional teaching capacities should be at the forefront of any curriculum initiative.

The interrelatedness between curriculum development and professional development was extensively referred to in the literature. Al Busaidi & Tuzluzkova (2014) argue that:

'high standard' or 'high quality' professional development programmes can lead to changes in the teacher classroom activities, thus improving teacher capabilities and confidence in implementing certain teaching techniques, increasing self-reported knowledge, abilities and skills, and consequently, positively affecting teaching-learning practice. (Al Busaidi & Tuzluzkova, 2014, p. 75)

Despite the realization of the influential role of professional development in enhancing curriculum development, this interactive relationship can be successful after careful consideration of the teachers' needs. In their study, Al Busaidi and

Tuzluzkova (2014) elaborate on the significance of formulating a framework for the aim of identifying aspects of professional development for language educators in a higher education context. The examination of experience of professional development policy and practice at the Language Center of Sultan Qaboos University in Oman can be informative to the current study. This study involved a discussion of teachers' interests and motivation in association with the current practices of professional development. The findings showed that the framework of professional development adopted by the Professional Development and Research Unit at the Language Center of Sultan Qaboos University is a successful one. This is because the adopted framework introduces a set of systematic on-going stages which involve planning, designing, implementing, monitoring and promoting programmes of professional development. The experience of professional development represented at this study can inform the current research since it exposes a successful approach implemented in an ELT programme of a higher education institution in Oman which is similar to some extent to our context. The English programme administration at the Ministry of Higher Education should regard the discussion about a professional development framework as a priority focusing on strategies which can be used to identify the professional teachers' needs and seeking collaborative 'relationships with the broader educational community' (Al Busaidi and Tuzluzkova, 2014, p. 81).

A more vivid speculation on the issue of professional development is provided by Al-Aufi (2014) whose study was primarily concerned with identifying the growing demand to improve the teaching quality and professional development at the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. The issues of 'reorganization and prioritization of academics' PD needs, barriers to effective PD, and factors to enhance PD of academics regarding teaching quality improvement in the colleges' discussed by Al-Aufi are central to the current study particularly because his study is based on the same context. Using a mixed- methods research design which involved a survey, semi-structured interviews and a focus group, the study revealed a number of results, the most important being the lack of a clear institutional policy for professional development at the colleges. Al-Aufi's approach

of professional development is centered on improving the teaching quality which stresses the need to provide a professional development programme targeted at the quality of teaching as a fundamental curriculum component.

A number of empirical studies have aimed at investigating the perceptions of English teachers regarding the current practices of professional development in various educational settings. Raza (2010) conducted a study to explore the continuing professional development (CPD) of expatriate (EFL) English teachers in the foundation programme of federal universities in the United Arab Emirates. The researcher concentrated on exploring teachers' perceptions about the phenomenon of (CPD) and the basis on which they select CPD initiatives and the factors which influence their choices. The study revealed that despite there is an existing framework for (CPD), teachers were 'less empowered and without a voice in the implementation of institutional CPD agenda' (Raza, 2010, p. 21). This study implies that it isn't sufficient to establish a framework for CPD at ELT programmes but in order to activate the existing framework teachers' perceptions regarding the various aspects of CPD should be acknowledged.

A study conducted by Troudi and Alwan (2010) aimed at investigating the perceptions of English language female secondary school teachers in the United Arab Emirates on curriculum change. The issue of teachers' empowerment previously highlighted by Raza (2009) has been alluded to in the findings of their study. The study of Troudi and Alwan (2010) was founded on the belief that the defects in the English language curriculum were attributable to the absence of the teachers' voice in curriculum change. The study also referred to the current circumstances of the English language curriculum in which problems with students' assessment and other problems of unimplemented elements of the curriculum such as needs analysis, curriculum evaluation and curricular support have been observed. The study highlighted the significance of giving teachers a voice with regards to initiating curricular changes aimed at curriculum development 'to eliminate negative psychological effects such as marginalization and powerlessness' (Troudi & Alwan, 2010, p. 107).

The examination of the two previous studies can help us to conceptualize the concepts of curriculum development and professional development as two inextricable processes. Curriculum development at the Colleges of Applied Sciences can be achieved after conducting holistic needs analysis aimed at identifying the academic needs of the learners as well as the professional needs of the EAP teachers. The obtained results of the needs analysis stage will represent rich data for the establishment of a systematic on-going framework for professional development at the colleges.

Summary

The present chapter was organized to provide a thoughtful review of the fundamental constructs of this research study. The conceptualization of curriculum in light of the current influential debates in the curriculum literature was followed by an elaborate discussion on philosophical orientations. The discussion on the philosophical educational orientations underlying the study was aimed at exposing the researcher's conceptual framework which is implied throughout the chapter. The subsequent discussion of curriculum development models was also intended to uncover the conceptual stance of the researcher with respect to the investigated curriculum issues. The last two sections of this chapter were devoted to curriculum development in the context of EAP with the aim of demonstrating various perspectives inferred from relevant empirical studies. The last part was specified to analyze the interrelatedness between curriculum development and professional development emphasizing on the centrality of teachers' contribution in these interconnected educational phenomena.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to present the methodological structure underpinning this study. A discussion was provided on the philosophical approach which informs this research arguing that the interpretive research paradigm is quite compatible and fits the overall research design. The following discussion focuses on the utilization of a mixed methods research for which this study triangulates data from multiple sources of information. The study's mixed methods approach relies on the use of an initial questionnaire as the first instrument in the data collection stage which was followed by in-depth semi- structured interviews. Data analysis is described and issues of trustworthiness and knowledge validation are discussed. This chapter concludes by addressing the most important ethical issues related to this research investigation and it also exposes some of the limitations of this research endeavor.

4.2 The Philosophical Approach Underpinning the Study

The philosophical approach or 'paradigm' which will be interchangeably used in the following discussion relates to the theoretical framework which encompasses 'the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 19). The term 'paradigm' is defined by Hammersley (2012, BERA, British Educational Research Association) as a set of philosophical assumptions which guide and orient the researcher's thinking about the topic he/she aims to investigate. This study can be philosophically aligned with the interpretive paradigm which is referred to by some philosophers as 'interpretivism'. The interpretive paradigm is compatible with the type of investigation intended by this study because it mainly focuses on eliciting how certain groups of people involved in an educational setting 'interpret and make sense of their world'

(Hammersley, 2012, BERA). The justification of why this particular study will be rendered as interpretive is because the researcher tends to value the distinctive nature of the participants' perspectives, beliefs and experiences.

Although this particular study seems to be philosophically compatible with the interpretive paradigm, it has a critical element attached to it. Gary (2013, p. 74) provides an explanation that the interrelatedness of paradigms in one research study is quite possible by stating 'One paradigm will be right for one kind of question, the other right for another.' This view provided in Gary's discussion is relevant to the current research investigation since the first research question of the study concentrates on exploring various curriculum challenges which are perceived to be problematic by EAP teachers in Colleges of Applied Sciences. The second question is intended to extract the perceptions of the research participants on how they think curriculum development can best be achieved in the EAP programme. The third research question though investigates the relation between curriculum development and teacher professional development at CAS colleges; it engages the participants in a critical reflection about their roles in the curriculum. The research questions are guided by the interpretive paradigm constituting an explorative 'educational enquiry' which is 'focused upon individuals, making explicit what is unique and distinctive of the 'thinking life' of each, and interpreting what is seen through the personal ideas which make each action intelligible' (Pring, 2000, p. 33). This research is expected to provide EAP teachers at the CAS colleges with the opportunity to reflect on issues concerning their status, roles, and professional potentialities. The centrality of the teachers' perceptions can be seen as empowering to their views regarding the perceived roles they intend to play in improving EAP courses at the CAS colleges.

The research design of this study will be focused on providing answers to the following research questions:

- 1. What are the curriculum challenges encountered by EAP teachers in Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman?***

2. *How do EAP teachers think that curriculum development can best be achieved?*

3. *How does the provision of professional development relate to curriculum development?*

This research can be seen as collaborative and participatory educational inquiry that does 'engage the participants as active collaborators' in the study' (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 22).

Creswell and Clark (2007) discuss how a study which involves a two-phase mixed methods design is referred to as the explanatory design. This study is an example of an explanatory design because it will start with a quantitative phase in which EAP teachers around the six Colleges of Applied Sciences will be asked to participate in a questionnaire. The second phase is qualitative in nature as it includes semi-structured interviews to provide the participants the opportunity to speak for themselves and 'to expound the full significance of their actions' (Pring, 2000, p. 39). Creswell and Clark (2007) add that the qualitative phase is expected to clear any ambiguities with regards to the questionnaire and to explain surprising results obtained from the first phase. This explanatory design seems quite important in this research because analyzing the questionnaire data will guide the subsequent process of deciding on the appropriate questions and participants for follow-up in depth qualitative interviews.

4.2.1 The Interpretive Research Paradigm

The interpretive research paradigm which is also referred to as the 'constructivist paradigm' is intended to be the guiding philosophical approach of this research study (Pring, 2000, p. 48). In his extended discussion on philosophical paradigms, Pring (2000) states that the interpretive constructivist paradigm is concerned with the reality which is seen as a 'social construction of the mind' which can be attained through a form of interactive process between the researcher and the research subjects. The significant aspect of the interpretive paradigm which is

being highlighted by Pring (2000) is that the truth being sought by the interpretive researcher is a matter of negotiated consensus among the research participants and the researcher. This particular feature is very important because it expounds the value attached to the participants' views and perceptions which constitutes the foundation on which this research investigation is formulated.

Another important aspect which can illustrate interpretive research and can highly relate to the current study is that it 'explores the distinctive features and circumstances related to a particular case or situation' (Ernest, 1994, p. 25). Interpretive research as discussed by Ernest is based on rich 'thick' descriptions which can be obtained by the researcher from the participants on the case under study. The current study is aimed at approaching a group of individuals who are involved within an educational organization in order to reach 'in-depth understandings' on their lived experiences which in the case of the current research revolve around curriculum challenges encountered in teaching EAP courses at the CAS colleges (Lichtman, 2006, p. 8).

A set of certain characteristics about interpretive research were presented by Lichtman (2014, p. 38) stressing the fact that this kind of research goes beyond mere descriptions of events and lived experiences because it intends to bring about understandings and interpretations about 'human phenomenon, human interaction, or human discourse.' On the distinctive nature of the interpretive paradigm as a major qualitative research approach, Lichtman (2014) focuses on the impact of the researcher throughout the various research stages arguing that 'it is through his or her eyes and ears that questions are formulated, and data are identified, collected, analyzed, and interpreted' (p. 31).

The interpretive researcher should be able see things in the same way as the research participants in order to 'recognize and document the internal rationality or logic of their perspectives' (Hammersley, 2008, p. 5). The reflective and subjective aspect of interpretive research is quite influential to this research study since the understanding of multiple truths is not only triggered from the participants but also influenced, shaped, and reconstructed by the interpretive researcher. Peshkin

(2000) represents this particular nature of interpretive research by stating that the researcher's identity interweaves with his or her understanding of the object of investigation.

The current study will make use of 'the meaning-perspective' suggested by Gage (1989, p. 5) to highlight the value attributed to interpretations retrieved by the participants which are considered significant in interpretive research. Paul and Marfo (2001, p. 533) introduce another aspect of interpretive research which can be seen as quite relevant to the nature of this research study. They discuss how qualitative research has made great contributions in the various areas of education particularly 'the improvement of schooling' and through this understanding, the challenges and opportunities of those engaged in school life can be met.

The interpretive paradigm which is employed in this study needs to be seen as a powerful philosophical orientation by which 'educators, staff developers, or work place trainers' can talk about the challenges and the dilemmas they are exposed to in their work environment (Garrick, 1999, p. 148-149). Employing this interpretive paradigm will provide the opportunity for the researcher to be actively involved with participants from various CAS colleges in Oman to share their professional challenges pertaining to EAP curriculum in an interactive process which is expected to involve both the researcher and the researched to construct meaningful understanding of the investigated challenges.

The ontological and epistemological orientations can be viewed as the most distinctive elements which distinguish the interpretive paradigm from its counterpart the positivist paradigm. The definition provided by Hammersley (2012, BERA) on the term 'ontology' states that it refers to the nature of what exists. The ontology of the interpretive paradigm is described as 'constructivism's relativism' which is based on the existence of multiple realities which can be conflicting but can alter with time 'as their constructors become more informed and sophisticated' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p.110).

With respect to the epistemology of the interpretive paradigm, it is described as 'transactional and subjectivist' which characterizes the nature of investigation in interpretive inquiry. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), the interpretive investigator is involved in an interactive process through which the participants' retrieved constructions are refined subjectively through the eyes of the researcher. It has been clarified that there is a close interrelatedness between the epistemology, the theoretical approach and the research methodology in which epistemology is embodied in the theoretical approach and encapsulates the methodological choices made by the researcher. Crotty (1998, p. 3) discusses epistemology as 'a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know.' Crotty (1998) provided an illustrative figure in which he allocated epistemology, the theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods in a way which indicates they are meant to inform one another.

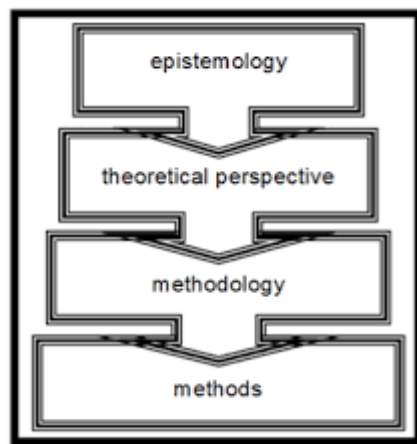


Figure 4.1: Representation of research elements (Crotty, 1998: 4)

Crotty's illustrative figure is clear and useful for novice researchers to see how the researcher's epistemology tends to relate to the theoretical perspectives and assumptions underpinning the study. The methodology is illustrated after the researcher becomes conceptually clear on the theoretical approach of the research and starts discerning on the methods which can be aligned to the overall research design.

4.3 Mixed-Methods Research

Brown (2014, p. 9) discusses that mixed-methods research which has become popular in TESOL recently involves using both 'the qualitative and quantitative methods systematically and in a complimentary relationship to reinforce each other.' The current research study can be rendered as a 'qualitative mixed' research which combines both qualitative and quantitative methods but the research can still be seen as predominately qualitative. The quantitative element of this study is represented through the use of a questionnaire which is considered a convenient quantitative method to elicit general views and opinions on the topic from the research participants. Using the questionnaire as the initial method for data collection is expected to generate general views from the participants on the nature of the investigated curriculum challenges. However, due to the limitations of on-line questionnaires, the qualitative phase of conducting semi-structured interviews is meant to enhance the quality of the collected data through allowing the participants an open platform to express their attitudes and experiences.

Though this research is aligned with the interpretive qualitative paradigm in which the qualitative tradition dominates the theoretical scene, data collection and analysis, 'it allows for different methods to coexist' (Alexander, 2006, p. 212). This kind of peaceful coexistence of methods is indicated by Niglas (2009) who believes that combining qualitative and quantitative methods can generate benefits for the practice of educational research specifically in situations where these methods complement each other in a way which will facilitate the investigation of educational phenomenon.

4.4 Case Study Methodology

Yin (2014, p. 2) defines a case study as an empirical research inquiry which 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon 'the case' in its real world context.' In the current research, a case study will be the adopted methodology which will guide the investigation of this educational research endeavor. The researcher has

chosen a case study for this research because it is a convenient strategy to investigate educational programmes which in the CAS context will be the ELT programme in general and the EAP courses in particular. Another reason denoted by Golby (1994) which justifies the selection of a case study research because it is preferred by educational researchers and practitioners who have some provisional knowledge and understanding of the case and want to undertake further investigation. With respect to the current study, the researcher is an experienced EAP practitioner and has developed an awareness on the existence of some EAP curriculum challenges in the colleges. Based on this experience, the aim is to provide an in-depth understanding on the nature of these challenges by conducting a case study research.

Other discussions that were devoted to indicate the relative value of case study research emphasized how conducting case study research can contribute to the development of practical solutions to the issues being investigated. It is important to highlight that the case study research design allows the researcher, the participants as well as the targeted research audience 'to conceptualize the problem, understand more fully its wider significance and act more intelligently in resolving it' (Golby, 1994, p. 16).

It was further indicated by Creswell (2007, p. 73) a 'case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (the case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time' through the use of multiple sources of information which are expected to generate in-depth data. Although the current study is based on investigating EAP curriculum issues within the ELT programme which is standardized over the six CAS colleges, two EAP programmes with their teaching staff members in two CAS colleges will be used as my case studies in this research investigation. With the focus of the current interpretive research directed towards investigating EAP curriculum issues, the case studies will be conducted in two CAS colleges to further investigate the EAP programme and to provide deep understanding on the nature of EAP curriculum challenges as retained from the participants' 'real-world perspective' (Yin, 2014, p.

4). Creswell (2007) justifies the use of multiple case studies highlighting that such design can bring about different perspectives on the investigated issues. Though single-case studies are still as valuable, 'analytic conclusions independently arising from two cases, as with two experiments, will be more powerful than those coming from a single case' (Yin, 2014, p. 64). The multiple-case study design (two EAP programmes at two CAS colleges) of the current research allows the researcher to reach more rigorous results and to construct an understanding about theoretical concepts or principles which can be generalized to other situations. The case study design was opted for to facilitate in-depth understanding of EAP curriculum challenges at CAS colleges which is characteristic of the interpretive paradigm. Using a case study as a research approach is expected to allow for 'generalizable findings or lessons learned' which may potentially be applied to a variety of similar educational contexts. (Yin, 2014, p. 40)

Due to the exploratory nature of this particular interpretive research investigation which is more focused on the 'what' of curriculum challenges encountered by EAP teachers in CAS colleges, it can be classified as an exploratory case study. Stake (1995, p. 4) points out that it can be useful to choose 'cases which are typical or representative of other cases.' The methodological procedures of using collective or multiple case studies in this research design will involve (two cases) which will be the EAP programme at College of Sohar for Applied Sciences and the EAP programme at College of Rustaq for Applied Sciences which has been recently changed into Rustaq College of Education. The reason behind selecting College of Sohar for Applied Sciences to conduct the case study is that the researcher has developed sufficient professional knowledge of the EAP programme and has also witnessed some of the curriculum problems based upon personal experience at the college as a level coordinator for EAP courses. Establishing rapport isn't expected to be an issue in this college because the researcher has worked for the college before and has managed to establish good professional relations with most of the teaching staff members at the English department. The qualitative data collection at Sohar College was based on conducting 10 semi-structured interviews with EAP teachers. The type of data collected from this college is

expected to be valuable and will provide a better understanding of the investigated curriculum challenges.

The EAP programme in College of Rustaq for Applied Sciences (which was recently changed into Rustaq College of Education) was selected to be the second case because it is the only college in which the English department is running two programmes; the teacher-training programme and the English language courses which includes EAP courses. The College of Rustaq includes highly experienced teaching staff members with varied teaching experiences in the field of educational research. As one of the leading colleges in Oman, this college organizes educational conferences, seminars, and workshops and it is expected that selecting participants from the EAP programme provided at College of Rustaq will yield well-informed understandings and thoughtful perspectives on the investigated EAP curriculum challenges. The researcher selected 10 EAP teachers from college of Rustaq to participate in semi-structured interviews. The case study design on which this research is founded can help the researcher to attain a better understanding on these two cases. It is also expected to help the researcher explain why curriculum challenges exist and will allow for generalization from these cases through a process of 'in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and the patterns which emerge' (Sturman, 1994, p. 61).

As stated earlier, the current multiple case study design will be based in two research sites, (College of Sohar and College of Rustaq) and will rely on the use of multiple sources of evidence. Data will be triangulated from quantitative and qualitative evidence through the distribution of a questionnaire and conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews. A basic feature of case study design as highlighted by Yin (2014) which can be evident in this research study is that theoretical propositions underlying the study can be informative to the subsequent stages of data collection and analysis. Despite the many views that tend to criticize the case study design claiming that researchers are faced with 'inability to generalize from case study findings', this argument isn't necessarily true (Yin, 2014, p. 20). This is because though 'statistical generalization' is considered a

fatal mistake by Yin (2014), it is always possible for interpretive researchers to strive for 'analytic generalization' which goes beyond the specific cases that are being investigated to include other concrete situations. Other academics have elaborated on the issue of generalization in case study research by stating that interpretive case study researchers should not be interested in seeking generalizations as much as they should 'seek theories which will penetrate the varying conditions of actions' (Stenhouse, 1988, p. 49). In the case of the current research, the data collected from the two cases within the case study design can relate to the theoretical truth in the field being investigated which Yin (2014) referred to as 'analytic generalizations'. Analytic generalizations can provide useful theoretical interpretations for this interpretive study which can lead to better understanding of EAP curriculum challenges at the CAS colleges and can also make a valuable contribution to the relevant literature on the topic of EAP curriculum development.

One of the important features which characterize qualitative research is the ability to be adaptive to unpredictable circumstances and unforeseen contextual factors. This is why this research investigation will be established on an emergent design to accommodate any further modifications which can be made by the researcher at any phase of conducting the research study. The emergent design adopted by this research allowed the researcher more flexibility of continuously trying to refine the main research questions. Moreover, it is this emergent design which facilitated the negotiation of philosophical perspectives of this research in order to reach a sense of conceptual clarity. The researcher has preconceptions that the study allows for the co-existence of the interpretive paradigm and the critical paradigm. However, after discussing this philosophical issue with researchers and supervisors, it was clarified that this research investigation is a purely interpretive research enterprise but it has an embedded critical element. It is also important to allude that the emergent design of the case study will allow for the consideration of any themes, issues, or propositions that might emerge during the data analysis.

Since adopting a qualitative case study design is considered significant for attaining an exploration of a phenomenon within its real life context, this research strategy seems to be convenient for the current study. Throughout a case study research, the issue under investigation 'is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood' (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). It is this collaborative meaning-making process between the researcher and the participants that seems to be central to the qualitative nature of this research.

A number of educational researchers and theoreticians tend to use various terms to refer to the different types of case studies which may be confusing for the researcher who intends to locate his/her research within the available case study categories. Although, this study is a multiple-case study involving two cases to be investigated, the term 'instrumental case study' provided by Stake (1995) can be applicable at this point. The instrumental case study is defined as the study which is designed to 'gain insight and understanding of a particular situation or phenomenon' Stake (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 550). However, the term which is extensively used by many authors and seems to be more compatible to the nature of this research study is 'evaluative case study'. According to Stenhouse (1988, p. 50)

In evaluative case studies a single case or collection of cases is studied in depth with the purpose of providing educational actors or decision makers (administrators, teachers, parents, pupils, etc.) with information that will help them judge the merit and worth of policies, programmes or institutions.

The two case studies undertaken in this study can be seen as examples of evaluative case studies because they were studied in depth, aiming at providing decision makers and EAP practitioners at CAS colleges with valuable information which can assist them in producing sound judgments in relation to the implemented EAP curriculum.

4.5 Participants and Sampling Procedures

Justifications for selecting the research sites have been already provided under the section devoted for the discussion of the case study methodology. The study will involve EAP teachers from the six CAS colleges. The total number of English teachers across the colleges is approximately 250 but only those involved in teaching EAP courses were chosen to participate in the study. A number of EAP teachers at CAS colleges are expatriate English teachers who are either native speakers of English or non-native speakers specialized in English language teaching. Omani teachers involved in teaching EAP have a minimum Master degree in ELT or in a related field of study. There is a limited number of Omani PhD holders in the English departments in CAS colleges who were selected as part of the Ministry's plan for developing them professionally. Many of the expatriate English teachers in CAS colleges have long teaching experiences in the Gulf region and are recruited directly by the Ministry of Higher Education; therefore their contracts are more secure than those recruited by recruitment agencies. Most of the expatriate teaching staff members in the English departments are recruited by agencies and do not appear to have the work stability because many stay for a year or two and leave the country searching for better working conditions.

The current study will adopt purposeful sampling strategies in both the quantitative and qualitative phase which requires setting a certain criterion for selecting the research participants. Both the initial questionnaire and the subsequent semi-structured interviews will only target EAP teachers because they are the most involved in the topic under investigation. Probability sampling techniques are not relevant in this context; since it is purposeful sampling which 'can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination' (Creswell, 2007, p. 118). Creswell (2007) argues that it is important for the qualitative researcher to approach individuals who have experienced the investigated phenomenon and therefore can share their lived experiences and perspectives with the researcher. This is why purposeful sampling is used as a primary approach by selecting

teachers who have been involved in teaching EAP and have developed awareness about EAP curriculum challenges.

In the initial phase of data collection, an on-line questionnaire was sent by e-mail to all EAP teachers in CAS colleges. The questionnaire was aimed at eliciting the general views of the participants on EAP curriculum challenges. The participants were given a time frame of two weeks to fill out the questionnaire. The majority of participants who took part in filling out the questionnaire were expatriate teachers a number of whom were native English speakers and others who were non-native English speakers. In addition to the expatriate teachers, a group of Omani teachers involved in teaching EAP courses participated in the on-line questionnaire. After the first week of sending the questionnaire, only a few participants tended to participate. However, after coordinating with HODs at the six colleges, this yielded a higher response rate by the second week. In the second qualitative phase, the researcher selected 10 EAP teachers from each research site considering the selected participants would have some teaching experience in EAP at CAS. The selection criteria used by the researcher to choose the participants for the qualitative interviewing phase was aimed at targeting both expat and local teachers from the two colleges to allow for various opinions to be brought at this stage. Some of the participants were native English speakers from countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The non-native teachers who participated in the interview were either non-native Arab teachers coming from countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Syria and the other non-native group of teachers were local Omani teachers. The participants who participated in the interview were aged between 26 and 55 and have taught EAP courses for at least two semesters at CAS colleges. Selecting participants on the basis of their experience and the level of their familiarity with the investigated phenomenon contributed in providing rigorous and insightful qualitative data. The researcher conducted 10 interviews in College of Sohar and 10 interviews in College of Rustaq. The 20 conducted interviews were analyzed qualitatively. More discussion about the qualitative process of analyzing interview transcripts will be provided in the following sections.

4.6 Access and Acceptance

The researcher went through the formalities of gaining access from the Ministry of Higher Education to conduct this research at the Colleges of Applied Sciences. To obtain the official approval of the organization, a letter was sent to the Directorate General of Colleges of Applied Sciences at the Ministry explaining the nature of the research, the phases of data collection and the time frame required to conduct the study. After obtaining the Ministry's official approval to conduct the research see Appendix (4), the Directorate General of CAS circulated the written approval to all the colleges and Heads of English departments who were informed of the study and were encouraged to provide the necessary support and cooperation to the researcher.

All ethical considerations approaching the research participants required them to voluntarily sign a consent form (see Appendix 3) stating the purpose and the nature of the study. Participants were informed that their identities would be anonymous and the information provided would be processed confidentially and only utilized for research purposes.

Although the selection of the research sites was clearly justified by the researcher in the previous sections, another relevant aspect was accessibility to the research sites and research participants. Despite that the quantitative phase of distributing the questionnaire involved all the six Colleges of Applied Sciences, the case study was conducted in two colleges which were chosen because they could be easily reached due to the proximity to the researcher. College of Sohar was selected because of the researcher's familiarity with the context and ease of access to the research data. The researcher worked as an EAP practitioner and a level coordinator for EAP courses at College of Sohar for Applied Sciences for four years and maintains a good professional relationship with the college's deanship as well as teaching staff members in the English department. This aspect of accessibility to research sites was further discussed by Burgess (1984) who

indicates that it is important for the researcher to choose research sites with optimal circumstances for success as the participants' willingness to cooperate, the convenience of accessing the participants, and the logistics required to carry out the research enterprise.

The second research site is Rustaq College of Education and was selected because it is the second closest college to the researcher after Sohar. Other colleges are located in remote areas and would require setting extra arrangements by the researcher. Rustaq College of Education is the only college in which the teacher-training programme is still running and it includes highly qualified teaching staff in the English department. A number of successful educational conferences and symposiums are being organized by the English department in College of Rustaq. EAP teachers in Rustaq are exposed to more opportunities of intellectual enlightenment on various educational issues and can provide insightful interpretations about EAP curriculum challenges investigated in the current study.

4.7 Data Collection

Despite the research being described as a qualitative inquiry, a mixed-methods approach is used. Considering that case studies involve a wide range of data collection procedures as stated by Creswell (2007), the primary method of data collection will be mainly qualitative. The only quantitative method used in this study is the initial survey which was administered as the first phase in the data collection stage to allow for the emergence of some initial thoughts from the participants on the investigated phenomenon. The study will allow these 'different methods to co-exist' in order to provide a clear in-depth picture of the case (Alexander, 2006, p. 212).

According to Gorard (as cited in Makenze and Knipe, 2006, p. 7) combined or mixed-methods research has been characterized as 'key element in the improvement of social sciences including educational research.' The view that combining quantitative and qualitative methods can contribute to educational

research is true but as highlighted by Oppenheim (2000) researchers must be cautious when using the mixed-methods approach because there should be a rational link between the adopted measurement and the overall research methodology. With respect to the current study using the questionnaire as the initial method of data collection, it has also been complemented by subsequent in-depth semi-structured interviews and is meant to be compatible with the overall research methodology adopted in the current study. This is due to the limitations which characterize the questionnaire as it lacks the opportunity for an in-depth investigation as that provided by interviewing. This aspect has been enhanced in the current research by the strength of the qualitative inquiry.

4.7.1 The Questionnaire

In this study, the use of a questionnaire as a quantitative instrument in the initial stage of data collection is aimed at exploring and identifying themes and general challenges which will be further investigated in the follow-up semi-structured interviews with EAP teachers. In this case, a questionnaire consisting of 30 items was designed for the sake of eliciting teachers' attitudes on existing EAP curriculum challenges for which they were asked to determine the level of agreement on a 5 point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree) (Muijs, 2011, p. 41). The last section of the questionnaire consists of 5 open-ended questions to allow the respondents to further expand their opinions on curriculum challenges in EAP courses. Some of the questionnaire items were designed on the basis of my personal and professional experience of working as an EAP teacher and level coordinator at CAS Sohar. Other questionnaire items were developed from the literature review and previous questionnaires investigating curriculum related issues (e.g. Eslami, 2010; Kutlay, 2012). The questionnaire was administered and distributed to all EAP teachers in the colleges who have developed knowledge on EAP courses and can provide their reflections on existing curriculum challenges (see Appendix 1). New teachers who have been assigned to teach EAP courses at

the time of collecting the data will be excluded to ensure the quality of the respondents' views on the investigated issues. Analyzing the questionnaire data is expected to help the researcher in reaching an agreement on the nature of the existing curriculum challenges and will also facilitate the development of focused research questions which will be used in follow-up semi-structured interviews. This careful combination of quantitative and qualitative elements as suggested by Niglas (2009) undoubtedly helped the researcher acquire adequate answers to the research questions.

It was quite important to pilot-test the questionnaire before distributing it to the research participants. Pallant (2007) emphasized the importance of this stage of pilot-testing in order to minimize problems and to ensure the clarity of the questionnaire's instructions and scale items. Therefore, the questionnaire was sent to seven EAP teachers from various CAS colleges for piloting. Those teachers were asked to fill out the questionnaire and then provide their feedback on the wording, structure and clarity of the items. After the piloting stage, the piloting group of EAP teachers made further suggestions on the questionnaire's format and structure of some of the items. They also provided constructive feedback pertaining to the restatement of some of the questions which were not clear. The piloting stage not only proved to be successful in minimizing problems with the questionnaire, but also provided valid content to the instrument. According to Muijs (2011) the content validity refers to whether or not the content of the questionnaire items is right to measure the concept which we are attempting to measure. In the piloting stage, respondents were asked to provide their comments not only on the questions but also on the investigated concepts which were addressed by each item in the questionnaire. The piloting stage revealed some instances of ambiguity with certain items in the questionnaire because the teachers who participated in the piloting stage indicated that they had difficulty understanding the intended meaning of some questions. Therefore, a careful revision was required along with the restructuring of some items to enhance the clarity of the questionnaire.

The piloting stage helped in identifying the following areas that needed to be improved in the questionnaire:

Some participants indicated that the questionnaire items need to be organized according to the three main constructs of the questionnaire. Therefore, the questionnaire was further revised and the scale items were classified according to the main themes of the questionnaire which are EAP curriculum, teachers' role in curriculum and professional development.

Some participants felt that Q3 in the demographic section in the questionnaire which asked the participants to specify their educational background by selecting the option that best describe their ELT qualification was not clear. The last option in Q3 which was 'a Degree in a relevant subject taught and assessed in English' required modification and therefore changed to 'A qualification in (ELT) (e.g. TESOL, CELTA, DELTA, Trinity TEFL certificate).

The questionnaire consists of three sections. The first section was intended to reveal the demographic information about the participants and the second part included thirty questions and was primarily focused on exploring the participants' general perceptions on the study's major constructs which relate to the main research questions. The first category of the questions focused on the investigation of EAP curriculum challenges confronted by teachers at CAS. The second category of questions was designed to elicit the participants' views on how curriculum development can be achieved and the last category of the questions related to the investigation of professional development practices which could enhance curriculum development. The last section of the questionnaire consisted of five open-ended questions designed to allow the participants to elaborate on the investigated issues. The questionnaire was sent to a sample of one hundred teachers, which is equal to the total number of teachers involved in teaching EAP courses at CAS colleges. Approximately 80 out of the 100 teachers participated in the study by filling out the electronically distributed questionnaire. Most of the participants who completed the on-line questionnaire were expat teachers as

illustrated in the descriptive statistics of the categorical variables. The quantitative analysis also indicated that a significant number of the participants have long teaching experiences. It was further indicated that 69% of the participants held a Masters Degrees in ELT or a related field.

With respect to the reliability of the questionnaire on which the closed-questions' section is based, the internal consistency was assessed by applying the Cronbach's coefficient alpha test. This test required the use of SPSS software to 'provide an indication of the average correlation among all the items that make up the scale' (Pallant, 2007, p. 6). In order to make a judgment on the internal consistency of the questionnaire items, Muijs (2011) suggested that the measure obtained from the statistical test is expected to be above .700. To measure the reliability of the scale, a correlation coefficient test was done through the use of the SPSS software indicating a reliability measurement of over (.801).

4.7.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Though the previous section focused on explaining the contribution of the questionnaire to investigate EAP views and perceptions about curriculum issues, this instrument is limited in its length and depth of responses to further investigate the research phenomenon (Muijs, 2011, p. 39). This is why the research investigation will depend on the use of semi-structured interviews as the primary qualitative method which will uncover deeper understandings on curriculum issues as perceived by EAP practitioners in CAS colleges in Oman. The interview schedule consisted of 23 questions categorized according to the main research questions (see Appendix 2).

The research oriented interview was defined by Cannell and Kahn (as cited in Radnor, 1994, p. 13) as 'a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the purpose of obtaining research-relevant information.' This particular definition provides a general understanding of interviewing as a qualitative method as it highlights the aspect of 'research-relevant information.' This can be manifested

through the nature of interviewing as an instrument which requires the content of the interview to be oriented towards providing deep answers to the main research questions.

Radnor (1994) further explains that the significance of interviewing as a research tool lies in enabling the interpretive researcher to recognize, sort and distinguish 'the subtleties of meaning' and the multiple realities which have emerged during this interactive process. This aspect of interaction is quite important to our understanding of the interviewing process because it is through this interaction between the researcher and the researched that the truth about human actions and experiences can be illuminated. Interviewing can be seen as an interactive platform where 'people feel more capable of improving their practices and relationships one with the other in the pedagogical context' (Radnor, 1994, p. 10).

In the context of the current research, there will be more emphasis directed to the multiple perceptions and perspectives of the research participants in order to bring about a better understanding on the nature of EAP curriculum challenges at our colleges. This is why interviewing is viewed as the most adequate qualitative instrument as it will reveal to the interpretive researcher, the participants' feelings, intentions, meanings, and thoughts on the topic being investigated. This research instrument can be seen as the most appropriate manifestation of participants' inner thoughts and world views. However, this interactive meaning-making process should also account for the researcher's thoughts and interpretations since it is through his/her eyes information is gathered, filtered and social reality is being constructed.

There are many types of interviewing techniques which can be used in qualitative research such as structured standardized interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. The current research will make use of the semi-structured interviews due to their advantages for the nature of this research investigation. One reason why this particular interviewing technique was selected is because of its flexibility and its adaptive nature. Robson (2002) discussed how semi-structured interviews require the use of predetermined questions which

allows the interviewer the freedom to modify the order of the questions according to what he or she finds most appropriate. The interviewer can change the wording of the questions, give further explanations on their content, and omit or add new ones.

Another important reason why this interviewing style is selected as a primary method is because of its compatibility with the epistemological orientations of this research. Conducting semi-structured interviews will allow the emergence of the subjective meaning-making process which is emblematic of interpretive research. Semi-structured interviews rely on the use of pre-determined questions which are designed by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher can take the lead in this form of interviewing as the professional conversation will be focused on answering the main research questions. Lichtman (2014, p. 255) argued 'the issue of power dynamics can make a participant feel vulnerable.' Though, considering such issue is quite necessary for the interviewer, we need to come to the realization that the act of interpretive qualitative interviewing is subjective by nature. This truth has become widely accepted in qualitative research which sees the researcher as 'the instrument through which data is gathered, retrieved, and reported' (Lichtman, 2014, p. 255). It was further highlighted by Esterberg (2002) how using semi-structured interviews does conform to the explorative nature of this social investigation. This is because semi-structured interviews are targeted to allow the participants to articulate their opinions and thoughts in their own words.

The identification of the interview participants will depend on the use of purposeful sampling which requires deciding on a certain criterion. The criterion used in selecting the participants in this qualitative phase of the research is that they must all be EAP teachers who have developed a sufficient knowledge of EAP courses and therefore can reflect on the EAP curriculum challenges at the colleges. Before the data collection stage, the researcher established communication with EAP level-coordinators and they all cooperated by providing the researcher with the necessary information. During the Fall Semester 2015 which was concurrent with the data collection stage, new teachers were recruited and assigned to teach EAP

courses. My intention was to limit participants by including only teachers who have developed an awareness of the EAP curriculum and its existing challenges and are willing to take part in the study. The decision to select participants who taught EAP courses for at least two semesters was so they could give their views and voice their concerns openly on the problematic areas of EAP curriculum at the colleges. Four expatriate teachers and six Omani teachers were selected from each college based on their teaching experiences of teaching EAP courses. Though the majority of teaching staff members at CAS colleges are expatriates, only few have developed a full awareness of the nature of EAP courses and therefore were selected to participate in the interviews. This is due to the nature of their employment contracts which in most cases are not secure and also because many expat teachers do not stay for a long time in their teaching positions as many regularly seek better employment opportunities.

The study consisted of 20 semi-structured interviews for which ten participants were selected from College of Sohar and ten other participants selected from College of Rustaq. The emergent nature of interpretive research allowed the researcher to include more participants whenever he or she felt the collected data was not sufficient. The researcher intended to increase the quality of the collected data by approaching the intended participants individually in order to obtain the consent of those who have more experience in teaching EAP courses and willing to take part in the research investigation.

With regards to the location of the interviews, the researcher made further arrangements with the Learning Resource Centers in both Colleges to allocate a quiet and convenient room to conduct the interviews. Intended participants were provided the flexibility to specify the time which best suited their circumstances. The interview questions were prepared and piloted among a group of EAP teachers from various CAS colleges. Necessary modifications were made by the researcher to refine the interview questions and prepare the interview schedule. To ensure the quality of the interview, 5 interviews were conducted to pilot the

interview questions. This piloting stage helped the researcher in improving the following aspects of the interview schedule:

The piloting stage revealed a very important aspect to the researcher which is the significance of using probing statements in the situations where the participants provide short answers that did not seem sufficient to answer the research questions. The piloting stage provided a good preparation for the researcher through the use of various probing techniques to extract more elaborate accounts from the participants on the main issues investigated in the interview.

This piloting stage also helped in further refining some of the interview questions which were not clearly comprehended by the participants in the piloting stage. Some interview items were restated to enhance the clarity of the interview and to ensure that the participants are fully aware of the main constructs of the interviewing process.

A special recording device was used by the researcher and the participants were informed on this and their consent was sought prior to conducting the interviews. The recorded sound files were securely transferred from the recording device to the researcher's personal computer.

In his depiction of the interviewing process, Kvale (2015, p. 20) stated interviewing is 'a knowledge-producing activity' which is characterized by its inter-subjectivity. It is during this inter-subjective social practice, the researcher and researched construct the truth about the investigated social phenomenon.

The practice of research interviewing as highlighted by Kvale (2015) not only requires the cultivation of conversation skills but it also requires that the researcher should be capable of handling this sort of professional conversation so that it will be directed to the production of knowledge. To maintain a friendly atmosphere, the researcher attempted to make the interview sounds like a daily life conversation with fellow colleagues about a theme of a mutual interest. The first two minutes before the interview started were used to have a short informal

talk with the participants after which the researcher introduced a briefing for the participants so that they can become fully aware about what the researcher wants to know.

4.8 Data Analysis and Representation

Regarding the analysis of the collected data obtained from the questionnaire, the data was analyzed quantitatively. However, the answers provided by the respondents to the open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively. The qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire was manually analyzed using a table in which the data was categorized according to the main constructs investigated in the questions. The frequency of some of the responses throughout the answers provided by the respondents facilitated the qualitative analysis of this particular section of the questionnaire as illustrated in a table (see Appendix 5). The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were first transcribed and then analyzed qualitatively. The results of the administered questionnaire were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) through which the data was analyzed quantitatively. SPSS is a reliable programme which can largely assist the educational researcher in scoring and analyzing the quantitative data quickly and accurately (Bryman & Cramer, 2001, p. 15). At this particular stage, the researcher is expected to gain an understanding of the participants' general thoughts of challenging EAP curriculum elements. The descriptive analysis that which was generated by the SPSS as discussed by Pallant (2007) can help the researcher in describing the characteristics of the sample and to address specific research questions. For the purpose of analyzing the questionnaire, Frequencies was used to obtain the descriptive statistics for categorical items and Descriptives was used to obtain descriptive analysis for continuous variables of the questionnaire.

Creswell (2007, p. 148) provided a comprehensive conceptualization of the data analysis stage relevant to the interpretive tradition stating:

Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion.

This definition provided by Creswell (2007) explains the main stages of interpreting the qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews which normally begins by preparing the data to make it easily accessible to the researcher and then formulating a pattern through which data can best be represented in an appropriate and explicit way. Some authors such as Agar (1980) suggested that researchers need to be familiar with the data by reading through the entire transcripts several times before breaking the data into parts or themes. This was useful for analyzing the voluminous generated data since it enables the researcher to be immersed within the data after which he/she can easily anticipate the analytic strategies and the initial categories used to represent the data.

The main elements referred to in Creswell's explanation of the data analysis process revolve around two major concepts or sub-processes which are coding and interpretation. Creswell (2007) discussed how the interpretive researcher will ultimately be involved in a process of classifying or categorizing the emerging themes from the qualitative data. During this process, 'Researchers develop a short list of tentative codes (e.g., 12 or so) that match text segments' (Creswell, 2007, p. 152). It was further illustrated by Creswell how researchers may find it useful in this case to count the codes by determining 'the frequency of occurrence' of the codes within the passages. Although, this particular strategy can help the researchers to reduce the number of codes in the process of data analysis, it still appeared to be unreliable in this context. The process of data analysis is not meant to be linear or fixed but should be combined with the literature review. This linking scheme can help in refining the emerging codes by relating them to the main constructs which were elaborated in the literature review and will eventually help in addressing the main research questions.

The interpretation stage takes place after the identification of the codes or themes during which the researcher 'step back and form larger meanings of what is going on in the situations or sites' (Creswell, 2007, p. 154). It is during this interpretation process that researchers provide their reflections on the topic in light of the views and perspectives. Walcott (1994, p. 36) depicted this interpretation process 'at which the researcher transcends factual data and cautious analysis and begin to probe into what is to be made of them.'

In the context of this research, the qualitative data obtained from the recorded semi-structured interviews was transcribed and the researcher read through the generated data to establish a sense of familiarity with the entire transcripts. Analyzing the collected data by hand is impossible in the case of the current research due to the large amount of qualitative data. This is why the researcher opted for using the NVivo software programme to facilitate the process of data analysis (see Appendix 6). Using software programmes such as the NVivo has been encouraged by researchers because this programme 'stores data, organizes your data, enables you to assign labels or codes to your data, and facilitates searching through the data and locating specific text or words' (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 241).

The second level of analysis deals with processing the data by classifying it into themes and codes which can be analyzed on the basis of patterns and connections which emerge among these codes. Considering the methodological design of the research which makes use of the multiple case studies, Creswell (2007) stated the researcher is recommended to establish patterns and to search for corresponding relations between two or more categories which can be later illustrated in the form of a table. Yin (2014, p. 143) introduced a technique which can be useful for analyzing the data in the current research which he referred to as the cross-case synthesis. He suggested using a table to represent the data obtained from individual cases to provide a 'uniform framework'. This particular illustrative design of the represented data will facilitate the task of looking for

similarities and differences among the cases which can eventually help the researcher in developing naturalistic generalization.

It is important to refer to the data analysis strategies discussed earlier which can be representative of what some authors call coding in thematic analysis. In this form of thematic analysis, the researcher begins with developing a sense of familiarity with the data in order to establish codes. This exploratory nature is referred to as open coding and requires 'looking in the data for codes' (Ezzy, 2002, p. 87). This process of thematic analysis helps the researcher to identify themes and concepts derived from the data during which theory will be generated through the coding process. This is what distinguishes this form of data analysis from content analysis since thematic analysis is inductive in which the categorization scheme will highly rely on the themes and codes which are 'induced from the data' (Ezzy, 2002: 88). It is important when discussing the evidence of themes or categories to build up a convincing account for the readers. A number of writing strategies have been utilized in this research such as 'conveying subthemes, or subcategories; citing specific quotes; using different sources of data to cite multiple items of evidence; and providing multiple perspectives from individuals in study to show the divergent views' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 209).

A very important point to note on the qualitative data analysis is the efforts towards manual analysis and cross checking before the coding process which required extensive pre-analysis by hand. The initial analysis was started by reading through the transcripts many times and writing down the most important ideas in the transcripts which were found to be relevant to answer the research questions. After reaching a sense of familiarity with the most important ideas, the coding process was started and based on creating codes which were later assigned to respondents' extracts from the transcribed interviews. The selection of the codes was based on their re-occurrence throughout the transcripts and their relevance to the main research questions. During the coding process, a number of themes and sub-themes began to emerge. To ensure the validity of the coding process, the emerging themes were written down along with sub-themes in a paper (see

Appendix 9). Next, a manual analytical procedure was performed which contributed in building a logical chain of evidence and making a conceptual clarity at this particular stage. The following table 4.2 illustrates the process of coding and analyzing the interview transcripts.

Table 4.1. The Process of Analyzing and Coding Interview Transcripts

Procedures	Assigning Codes to interview Scripts	Codes	Merging or Separating themes into sub-themes	Making Conceptual Coherence
Looking for Major Themes				
EAP Curriculum Challenges	"It is top-down, Well, yes it affects because we are not involved in it, you just get disengaged from what is going on. You know it is very funny, I have been here three years and everyone starts coming in and they all say the same things like the things I said, and they think did anyone pay attention to this?"	Centralized top-down leadership at CAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of teachers' voice • Lack of communication • Resistance to change 	Most EAP teachers think that the current centralized leadership approach at CAS has given rise to many EAP curriculum challenges at the CAS collages. The current leadership approach does not involve teachers and therefore obstructs the establishment of a successful process of curriculum development.
EAP Curriculum Challenges	"I think teachers should play a major role in curriculum development then comes the students who can to some degree speak about their specific needs in the classrooms."	Curriculum Planning Related Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues related to assessing the learners' needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ ➤ Students' low proficiency level ➤ Lack of students' motivation 	EAP course objectives don't seem to address the learners' needs nor are aligned with their linguistic proficiency. This lack of alignment between EAP course objectives and the actual students' needs has led to students' lack of motivation in EAP courses.

EAP Curriculum Challenges	"a lot of these textbooks are not designed for IT and Engineering. I am trying to bridge the gap between what the students are doing and what the students are interested in at their majors and what this course has to offer because I know that these textbooks somehow meet the course objectives."	Issues Related to the Programme Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers' dissatisfaction with the textbooks Inconsistent use of supplementary materials 	EAP teachers are dissatisfied with the current implemented textbooks because of their lack of relevance to the students' major disciplines. This is why most of the EAP teachers tend to use supplementary materials to fill the gap with the current textbooks.
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4.9 Social Construction of Validity in Qualitative Research

Increasing the validity of qualitative research is important and has been discussed in the literature using various concepts such as the strength, trustworthiness, and the transferability of research knowledge. The underlying emergent design of this research study stresses the significance of conceptualizing the validity of social research not as a fixed or a separate stage but 'rather permeate all stages from the first thematization to the final reporting' (Kvale, 2015, p. 277).

One way of achieving validation in relation to the knowledge obtained and analyzed in this research study is by striving for what Kvale (2015) refers to as the Dialogical inter-subjectivity. This dialogical inter-subjectivity necessitates the researchers to be fully aware of the power asymmetry which exists between them and their participants, to facilitate the production of inter-subjective negotiated meaning.

As stated earlier, this research is founded on the position of validity being an encompassing process which permeates all the various stages of the research. Kvale (2015, p. 283-284) presented a comprehensive scheme of validation which includes seven stages in the qualitative inquiry. These validation stages are summarized as follows:

1. Thematizing: This process refers to the validation which can be achieved at the initial stages of negotiating the logic of the research questions and reflecting on the theoretical presuppositions of the topic.
2. Designing: This process requires checking the adequacy of the design and the instruments against the investigated topic and the purpose of the study. This will also maximize the produced knowledge and will minimize any expected harmful consequences.
3. Interviewing: Validity here relates to the trustworthiness of the respondents' data and the quality of the interviewing practice. In order for the act of interviewing to be trustworthy, the researcher had to constantly check the meaning of what is said and will also require involving the research participants to check the content of the interview transcripts.
4. Transcribing: This will require being able to perform a sound and valid translation of oral input from the recording device to an explicit written passage or a text.
5. Analyzing: This stage is intended to focus on the validation at the level of data analysis strategies which involve checking the validity of the categorization of themes and the logic of the final interpretations of data.
6. Validating: This requires determining the most appropriate form of validation for the study by using specific and content validation procedures. I have attempted to think of validation as an encompassing process similar to the validation approach suggested by Kvale. To achieve validity, I have adopted a critical stance throughout the various research stages starting from refining the research questions, checking the adequacy of the design and the instruments to the researched topic and systematically cross-checking and verifying the obtained data. Another significant validation procedure was performed through involving the research participants to provide their input about the instruments as well as the data revealed after the analysis stage. The participants provided their feedback about the questionnaire items and the interview questions before data collection which resulted in raising the quality and the clarity of research instruments.

Even after the data was analyzed, I have initiated a communicative validation process with some of the respondents who participated in the interview to verify the consistency and the trustworthiness of the research findings.

7. Reporting: This refers to the importance of performing a thoughtful check on the final report to check whether it represents a valid and truthful account of the main research findings. In the case of the current research, the researcher attempted to ascribe validity to the report of the findings by discussing the findings with some of the participants. This cross-checking and testing contributed in confirming the qualitative findings and ruling out any unnecessary evidence.

The validation scheme is aimed at presenting a comprehensive and continuous checking process which is intended to inform the 'quality control throughout all the stages of knowledge production' (Kvale, 2015, p. 284).

4.10 Ethical Considerations

In light of the ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2012), there are a number of ethical commitments to be fully realized by educational researchers. The current research investigation will be conducted in the Colleges of Applied Sciences and will involve EAP teachers who work for these colleges. The research takes into consideration the institutional ethical responsibilities as well as individual ethical commitments towards the research participants. With respect to gaining access and acceptance which represents the first ethical consideration in this study, the researcher went through the formal process of obtaining the ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter (see Appendix 3) and from the colleges where the study will be conducted. An official letter with a clear explanation of the research objectives, design and instruments as well as the intended participants was sent to the Directorate General of the Colleges of

Applied Sciences in Oman. The researcher obtained the ministry's official approval to carry out the field work in the colleges which was circulated to all the colleges. Heads of English departments were officially notified and provided with a copy of the institution's ethical approval and encouraged to provide the necessary cooperation and assistance to the researcher in conducting the study.

Qualitative research is intended to involve social interactions with EAP teachers from the CAS colleges; therefore a number of significant ethical considerations were abided by the researcher, which were seen as highly important in the current research. The responsibilities to the participants has been acknowledged because prior to the research, they were provided enough time to establish an awareness of the research objectives, the nature of the study and the kind of contribution expected from them in the study. The information was provided in the form of an e-mail sent to all the intended participants, along with voluntary consent form. Participants were also approached individually by the researcher and informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and those who agreed to participate would have the right to withdraw at any stage of the research investigation.

In his discussion on the power imbalance between the researcher and participants in qualitative research, Creswell (2007, p. 122) referred to a very important ethical issue which is relevant to the current research. He stated:

Al though studying one's own 'backyard' is often convenient and eliminates many obstacles to collecting data, researchers can jeopardize their jobs if they report unfavorable data or if participants disclose private information that might negatively influence the organization or workplace.

The ethical dilemma alluded to by Creswell is complicated because not only it concerns the researcher's workplace which could be seen as his/her own 'backyard' but also the vulnerability of the EAP teachers. Many EAP teachers are expatriate teachers who may feel reluctant to take part in this study or talk openly about problematic areas in the EAP curriculum. One technique to deal with such

incidents where the feeling of vulnerability may influence active participation of the respondents is through creating 'an environment that is trustworthy' (Lichtman, 2014, p. 61). One of the advantages of working on this research is that the participants were aware of the existence of various curriculum issues and wanted to be involved in the research as a contribution in developing the curriculum. The participants were clearly informed about the study and many of them expressed their willingness to take part in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the participants were made aware that the research would not be disclosed and any information about their identities and information provided will be dealt with privately and confidentially. Pseudonyms were used to replace the participants' original names to protect their identities. They were also provided with a written consent form which they signed before participating in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. It was essential to inform the participants that the data obtained from this research would only be used for research purposes, to assuage any concerns they may have had.

4.11 Limitations of the Study

This research study is aimed at exploring EAP curriculum challenges as well as obstacles which are expected to hamper the process of curriculum development. Due to the dearth of local literature from the Omani context on EAP curriculum challenges or curriculum development in higher education, the researcher had to formulate various theoretical associations with other relevant international contexts.

Another limitation for this research is that the qualitative phase was conducted on two research sites, the College of Sohar and the College of Rustaq, thus more valuable opinions and perspectives from teachers at other CAS colleges could have enriched the quality of the collected data. This suggests that more studies can be done in the future to further investigate curriculum issues employing other

methodological orientations and methods to contribute to the EAP curriculum literature in the higher education context in Oman.

Summary

This chapter outlines the paradigmatic and methodological underpinnings of the research. To summarize, this study is aligned with the constructivist-interpretive paradigm which values the inter-subjective interactions between the researcher and the researched in which understanding the research investigated issues has been constructed. The research design relied on the use of multiple-case studies in two Colleges of Applied Sciences utilizing the merits of mixed-methods research. The data collection stage began with the distribution of an on-line questionnaire to all EAP teachers across the colleges to elicit their general thoughts and opinions about the topic. After analyzing the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selected group of participants from two colleges, Sohar and Rustaq with the aim of investigating the topic deeply and thoroughly. The semi-structured interviews constitute the primary data collection instrument because they reveal valuable multiple perspectives from the participants on the theories being investigated. The data was thematically analyzed and represented after which the researcher has taken into consideration the use of validation schemes presented by Kvale (283-284). This chapter also discusses the ethical principles considered by the researcher in relation to the nature of the current research. Eventually, the researcher tended to address the scope and the limitations of the current study.

Chapter Five: Data Analysis and Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the current study which is mainly aimed at investigating EAP curriculum challenges encountered by EAP teachers in various Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. The findings have been thematically organized to correspond to the study's main research questions. The first part of this chapter focuses on presenting EAP teachers' understanding of curriculum which will be followed by a comprehensive account of the views of EAP teachers from various CAS colleges on the curriculum challenges in EAP courses. The second part of the analysis is aimed at providing answers for the second and third research questions of the present study. This part will be focused on exposing the participants' perceptions of two main constructs that are central in the current research investigation which are the significance of teachers' contribution in curriculum development and the need for professional development in solving existing curriculum challenges.

5.2 Analyzing the Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part included five questions intended to reveal demographic information about the participants which are presented in tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 as illustrated below. The second part of the questionnaire included thirty questions and was primarily focused on exploring the participants' general perceptions on the challenges related to the EAP curriculum. The questionnaire was sent to a sample of 100 teachers, which was the total number of teachers involved in teaching EAP courses at CAS colleges. Out of 100 teachers, 80 teachers participated in filling out the electronically distributed questionnaire. The majority of the teachers were expatriates as shown in the descriptive statistics of the categorical variables indicated in the following tables.

Table 5.1. Respondents' Nationality

Nationality		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Label	<none>		
Valid Values	1	Expat	53	65.4%
	2	Omani	27	33.3%
Missing Values	System		1	1.2%

Table 5.2. Distribution of Teaching Experience at CAS

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Label	<none>		
Valid Values	1	less than 1 year	15	18.5%
	2	1-5 years	49	60.5%
	3	5-10 years	14	17.3%
	4	more than 10 years	2	2.5%
Missing Values	System		1	1.2%

Table 5.1 indicates clearly that the number of expatriate teachers who filled out the questionnaire was 53 whereas the number of Omani teachers was 27 which indicates that expatriate EAP teachers constitute a majority at CAS colleges. It was also indicated in table 5.2 that a significant number of respondents of about 60.5% have acquired an experience of teaching English at CAS which ranges between 1 to 5 years. EAP teachers' experience at CAS is related to the aspect of insecurity of their employment contracts which will be further discussed in this chapter. The table also indicated that only 17.3% of EAP teachers have teaching experience which ranges between 5 to 10 years. Only 2 teachers of those participating in the study indicated that their teaching experience was less than one year.

Table 5.3. Respondents' Educational Background

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Label	<none>		
Valid Values	1	Qualification in TESOL	11	13.6%
	2	BA in ELT or related field	9	11.1%
	3	Masters in ELT or related field	56	69.1%
	4	PhD in ELT or related field	4	4.9%
Missing Values	System		1	1.2%

Table 5.4. Respondents' EAP Training Background

		Value	Count	Percent
Standard Attributes	Label	<none>		
Valid Values	1	Yes	21	25.9%
	2	No	59	72.8%
Missing Values	System		1	1.2%

With respect to the respondents' educational background, 69% hold a Master's degree in ELT or a related field as indicated in table 5.3. As stated in table 5.4, the majority of the respondents of about 72% indicated that they didn't undergo any sort of training prior to teaching EAP courses at CAS colleges. Only 25% of the respondents reported having some form of training in EAP which was mainly part of their degree fulfillment either at the BA or Masters Level. This gives an indication that there is no EAP pre-service training provided for EAP teachers at CAS colleges.

The second part of the questionnaire was intended to elicit the respondents' degree of agreement on a 5 point likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). This part consisted of 30 items which were categorized according to the main research questions. Items (1 to 10) in the questionnaire were targeted to provide answers for the first research question which was focused on the investigation of curriculum challenges in EAP courses at CAS colleges. Items (11 to 15) were intended to provide answers to the second research question which was intended to extract the participants' views on how curriculum development in EAP courses at CAS can be achieved. Items (16 to 30) of the questionnaire were intended to provide answers to the third research question which was directed to further investigate how certain professional development practices can enrich EAP curriculum development in the CAS context. Full range Descriptive analysis of questionnaire items is included in Appendix (10).

This research has adopted a mixed-methods design; therefore, the quantitative data retrieved from the questionnaire will be merged with the qualitative data obtained from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. The following sections are intended to provide answers to the main research questions through merging the quantitative and qualitative data which will be demonstrated in the presentation of themes throughout the discussion in this chapter.

5.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

As indicated in the previous chapter, the qualitative data that was used in this research came from the analysis of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the qualitative data resulted in the emergence of a number of codes which have been further refined and clustered into a set of major themes. The following table 5.6 shows how major themes have been organized in categories and sub-categories to allow for a better interpretation of the findings and to answer the main research

questions. The major themes as illustrated in the following table are: EAP curriculum challenges, EAP teachers' perceptions about curriculum development and fostering professional development for an enriched curriculum development.

Table 5.6 List of Major Themes and Categories

	Major Themes	Categories	Sub-categories
1	EAP Curriculum Challenges	1. The Centralized Leadership Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Teachers' Voice • Lack of communication channels • Resistance to change
		2. Curriculum Planning Related Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues related to assessing the learners' needs • Students' low proficiency level • Lack of students' motivation
		3. Issues Related to Program Goals and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAP or ESP • Textbook driven course objectives • Knowledge base orientation of curriculum
		4. Issues Related to deciding the Program Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' dissatisfaction with the textbooks • Inconsistent use of supplementary materials • Lack of effective use of Technology
		5. Issues Related to Designing an Assessment Plan to Assess the Students' Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues related to continuous assessment • Issues with final exams
		6. The Need for a Program Evaluation Scheme	
		7. The Impact of Contextual Factors on Curriculum Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job insecurity among EAP teachers • Teaching load • Lack of orientation • Lack of incentives
		8. The Need for In-service Training	
2	EAP Teachers' Perceptions about Curriculum Development	1. Revisiting the Current EAP Program	
		2. Needs Analysis in EAP Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing current program's goals and objectives • Aligning the EAP program with the academic disciplines • EAP teachers as curriculum developers

3	Fostering Professional Development for an Enriched Curriculum	Promoting a Culture of Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending International and local conferences • Enhancing collaborative teaching practices • Providing specialized training for EAP teachers
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5.4 EAP Teachers' Understanding of Curriculum

This section attempts to elicit EAP teachers' understanding of curriculum which was the initial question in the interview. The participants provided a variety of definitions of what they perceive the curriculum to mean but all their answers appeared to have something in common.

One recurrent theme provided by the participants is that they view curriculum as a guiding plan for what the teachers and the students are expected to be doing during a course of study. Dina (Female, British, 8 years at CAS) provided a definition that "*Curriculum is predominately a guide to what we are teaching.*" Her definition seemed quite similar to the definition stated by Muna (Female, Omani, 4 years at CAS) who sees curriculum as "*a mixture of things, plan, blueprint, materials, assessment, guidance for all teachers and students.*" Both participants seemed to agree on the notion that one of the basic objectives of curriculum is to guide all the parties involved about the integral elements which are equally important in defining what a curriculum is.

Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years at CAS) defined curriculum as a broad concept which "*goes beyond the textbook and the classroom and the students and it more represents a direction. For me it just where the students want to go and how the institution is helping them to get to that way or to get to that destination.*" This particular definition highlights the significant role of the institution in the context of the study which is perceived as having a powerful impact on how EAP teachers see curriculum. Abdul Aziz added:

“Curriculum will be a plan, but then at its core components which comprise the particular textbooks, particular instructional methods, the particular assessment that you are opting for the institution like here the case it is the Ministry of Higher Education”

As shown in the previous excerpt, the definition of curriculum is in line with some of the fundamental conceptualizations provided in the literature (e.g. Jackson, 1992 & Reid, 1992) which relate to the influence of educational institutions on curriculum planning and implementation. This institutional power which the participants referred to when exposing their understanding of curriculum was also evident in Ahmed's (Male, Omani, 6 years) definition who stated:

“Curriculum is a set of aims that the authority makers would like to see in the students, so they devise a set of lessons to be taught to the learners, this is how I can see curriculum”

Therefore, as indicated in the previous excerpt, the institutional power was clearly evident in the way curriculum was perceived by the research participants. It was clearly indicated through the analysis of the participants' answers that all seem to have an awareness of the comprehensiveness of curriculum as they all pointed out that the notion of curriculum comprises other sub-components which can't be separated from each other. Curriculum as seen by Mansour (Male, Omani, 4 years at CAS) consists of a number of elements and *“even any professional development workshops or events can come into defining what a curriculum is.”* The analysis of the definitions of curriculum indicated that the participants' understanding goes beyond the conventional definitions and presented thoughtful interpretations on how they conceptualized curriculum. The participants' understanding was not limited to the 'syllabus oriented' or the 'textbook oriented' definitions but instead represented curriculum as an interactive process which can influence and be influenced by other educational processes in the institution.

Results for Research Question 1:

5.5 EAP Curriculum Challenges

This section attempts to provide answers for the first research question to further investigate the nature of curriculum challenges encountered by EAP teachers at the various colleges. The quantitative and the qualitative analysis of the data has shown that the curriculum challenges referred to by the participants can be classified into three main challenges each of which includes a number of categories and sub-categories. This section will focus on the analysis of EAP curriculum challenges which have been categorized as; challenges related to the centralized leadership approach, curriculum planning related challenges as well as challenges related to the working conditions of EAP teachers at CAS colleges.

The following section will be devoted to the discussion of various curriculum challenges encountered by EAP teachers at CAS colleges by merging the results retrieved from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews.

5.5.1 Challenges related to the Centralized Leadership Approach

The analysis of the questionnaire items showed that there are a number of challenges that exist in the EAP programme at CAS. This was clearly indicated in the analysis of item (1) in the questionnaire to which a significant number of about 66.6% teachers either strongly agreed or agreed that some elements of the EAP curriculum provided at CAS are considered to be challenging. The analysis of the research data revealed that the centralized leadership approach is the prevalent administrative system in the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. The analysis of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews indicated that the existing top-down leadership approach at CAS colleges is the main challenge to which most of the curriculum related issues are attributed. Item (7) of the questionnaire shows that a significant percentage about 67.9% of EAP teachers at CAS indicated that they are not involved in the revision and evaluation of existing

course outlines. A similar finding in item (10) of the questionnaire related to the existence of a centralized leadership approach which indicated that 60% of participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed that EAP teachers at CAS are involved in writing exams. This finding was complemented by the analysis of the open-ended questions in the last section of the questionnaire. In responding to the first item of the open-ended questions to which the identities of the participants were anonymous, a participant indicated that the current leadership approach is based on *“centralization of the system and the absence of well-maintained channels of communication between the different levels of the hierarchy”*.

With regards to the analysis of the semi-structured interviews it was evident that the existence of a centralized leadership approach which was viewed as a dominant challenge by all the participants does influence EAP curriculum development at CAS colleges.

When asked about his views of the leadership approach which is currently in place at CAS colleges Amjad (Male, Syrian, 3 years at CAS) explained:

“It is definitely top-down. Of course it will affect. The system in the ministry is rigid and bureaucratic and the problem with rigid systems is that life develops faster than they can. They need more time. For the ministry to decide to change the book, it will take ten years”

From the analysis, there is an agreement on part of the participants as shown from the semi-structured interviews that the existing centralized system has a negative impact on developing the curriculum of EAP courses. Ameer (Male, Omani, 4 years at CAS) stated that:

“I think it is definitely top-down situation, the people in the top have got little insight on what happens inside our colleges or our classes so they might instruct us to do things based on the book or by the book but the situation demands another solution. So, whatever suggestions we give them, it goes like nobody hears us or nobody listens so it is definitely a top-down model. It affects curriculum development negatively”

The existence of a centralized system was also indicated by another participant who suggested that the system has to allow for top-down and bottom-up practices to coexist rather than having one dominant leadership approach. Yasir (Male, Omani, 5 years at CAS) who said that:

“I think it is top-down as I mentioned before, everything is centralized, everything is coming from the headquarters in Muscat in the Ministry and we apply it. I think it should be two-way. Top-down, no problem, but there should be some bottom up feedback going to them.....we do send some feedback but this is not enough”

Essentially, all the participants agree that the current centralized system at CAS colleges does not support initiating a process of curriculum development in EAP courses. The belief is that this leadership approach has given rise to some other issues such as; lack of teachers' voice, lack of communication channels, and the resistance to change on the part of both administrators and teachers.

5.5.1.1 Lack of Teachers' Voice

The lack of teachers' voice in curriculum has been viewed as a major challenge to EAP curriculum development at CAS colleges. An analysis of items (7 and 10) which was stated in the previous section alludes to the lack of teachers' contribution in the existing curriculum at CAS. In their response to item (12) of the questionnaire, 71% of participants reported that the main task for EAP teachers at the colleges is the implementation of the curriculum. 11.1% of the sample disagreed whereas 16% neither agreed nor disagreed with the item. The issue of lack of teachers' voice in curriculum was also evident in the analysis of item (13) to which 43.2% of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed, 37% neither agreed nor disagreed and 18.5 either strongly agreed or agreed that teachers' views about improving EAP courses are considered. The existing curriculum in the colleges has been designed by a group of coordinators who are involved in making curricular decisions regarding EAP courses. EAP textbooks are

supplied to the colleges by publishing companies whereas other curriculum elements have been designed by the Programme Director with the help of level coordinators all working as a team. This particular view on EAP curriculum design was referred to by Dina (Female, British, 8 years at CAS) who clarified further in the following excerpt:

“Ok, it kinds starts, we have the Programme Director in Muscat who works for the Ministry of Higher Education. The teachers have this strange illusion of Muscat. They always talk about Muscat and that there is like this big team of people that work there whereas realistically it is the Programme Director is located there. All of the work to do with curriculum and development or anything like that is done within the colleges generally by the coordinators, working as a team but working over a distance reporting to the PD”

Based on my own experience as an EAP teacher and level coordinator at the English Department at CAS Sohar, there is very limited contribution from teachers towards the EAP curriculum. Course objectives are designed by the Programme Director at higher levels in the Ministry. With respect to assessment polices, these are designed by assessment coordinators and later get approved by the Programme Director. All existing curriculum elements including textbooks, course objectives as well as assessment polices have been in place for a number of years and they have not been changed nor modified to cater for the emerging needs of students. The role played by EAP teachers in courses at CAS colleges is very limited and does not go beyond the implementation of the curriculum. The lack of teachers' voice in curriculum is attributed to the absence of a feedback system to allow teachers to share their concerns, ideas and suggestions. When asked about her views on the role played by EAP teachers in the EAP curriculum Klara (Female, American, 1 year at CAS) commented:

“But if we are given a voice and if we have the freedom to speak about our ideas, maybe we can make small changes. I talked with one of my Omani colleagues and she said that she has been trying to make

changes but she can only make small changes within individual courses because so much is coming down from the ministry that even she does not have much freedom to make changes that she thinks will be beneficial”

The Teachers’ sense of frustration on this issue was apparent especially that some teachers indicated that they constantly attempt to send their feedback on various curriculum related issues but there is rarely any follow-up to their feedback. Ameer (Male, Omani, 4 Years at CAS) commented on this issue:

“Yes, I actually have written a couple of proposals, and sent them directly to the Programme Director, but I haven’t received a feedback even if it says this doesn’t work, it would have been a negative feedback but at least a feedback, but I haven’t received anything”

The previous excerpt shows disregarding teachers’ constructive feedback can be demotivating for them. The following quote provided by Hamed (Male, Omani, more than 10 years at CAS) indicates that this issue can discourage teachers and hinder their creativity. When asked about the reaction of decision makers to the teachers’ proposed feedback regarding curriculum issues he responded:

“Yes I did. And the feedback was very neutral. Neither yes or No. That is our policy so you don’t know whether they agree with you or disagree with you. And because of that I don’t feel I want to discuss it further with them”

The comments represented in the previous excerpt highlight that EAP teachers have a very limited role in the current EAP curriculum which has formulated an obstacle to the efforts intended to improve or develop the curriculum. EAP curriculum development at CAS colleges can only be achieved by focusing on the students’ needs and allowing EAP teachers to make an effective contribution in the curriculum. Disregarding the views of teachers can influence their motivation and consequently hinder curriculum development.

5.5.1.2 Lack of Communication Channels

The centralized leadership approach dominating the leadership system at CAS colleges has led to the lack of efficient communication channels and has been revealed as one of the obstacles to EAP curriculum development. The issue of communication was apparent, particularly as there was no input from EAP teachers on the implemented curriculum elements. In their answer to item (29) of the questionnaire, participants showed that the lack of communication channels was an important issue. A significant number of the participants of 88.8% either strongly agreed or agreed that the English departments at CAS colleges should openly discuss curriculum issues with EAP teachers. This finding was further supported by a comment provided by one of the participants relating to this issue in the open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

“Administration and coordinators should be much more open with the teachers. I feel like many important things are being kept secret from us, and then we get in trouble for not knowing the expectations that the department and coordinators have of us”

This finding was also supported by the participants' responses in the semi-structured interviews. Klara (Female, American, 1 year) commented:

“I don't feel there is a lot of communication from administration, mostly I will just ask other teachers what they were doing but we didn't seem to get much guidance from administration as far as what we should be doing or what we should not be doing. We found out some things the hard way no body communicated ahead of time”

The findings revealed that the lack of communication was evident not only among teachers but also between teachers and the programme administrators. A number of teachers felt it was not safe to express their ideas on curriculum because they did not know if it would be accepted. Klara commented further on this issue:

“I feel we are all operating, working in isolation. I feel like there is no trust. It is not safe to express your ideas about anything, let alone curriculum development”

The sense of isolation indicated in the previous comment was also apparent across the six colleges. The lack of follow up to the kind of issues confronted by teachers in their classes was similar to the lack of feedback on how each college was dealing with curriculum related challenges. Lack of proper communication has led to individualized teaching practices by EAP teachers in various colleges which eventually influence the quality of teaching and learning in the EAP programme. Berla (Female, British, 8 years) referred to this particular issue in the following response:

“You need to develop the teachers to be all on the same page. We are teaching EAP and we need a benchmark for whatever the students are to achieve in the EAP because some people will write a report like this and some people will write a report like this. Some use APA and some use something else. So, everybody needs to be on the same page basically before we could even think about professional development”

The findings indicate that the lack of proper communication channels between EAP teachers and the programme administrators at CAS constitutes a barrier to curriculum development. Numerous curriculum challenges in the EAP programme have not been resolved because nothing was done on the part of the programme administration to maintain communication channels with the teachers to allow curricular issues to be openly discussed. Maintaining communication channels with the EAP practitioners is the first strategy which should be applied to identify curriculum challenges encountered by teachers and to determine a curriculum development plan to deal with existing issues.

5.5.1.3 Resistance to Change

One of the challenging aspects related to the existence of a centralized top-down approach at CAS colleges is that change is very difficult to implement if not impossible, particularly due to the standardization of the EAP programme across the CAS colleges. EAP teachers alluded to a number of challenges and dealing with these curriculum challenges will certainly demand some changes. However, under the dominant centralized leadership practiced at CAS colleges, change is hard to achieve because the colleges do not appear to agree on a specific mechanism to deal with the current challenges. Abdul Aziz (Male, local, 5 years at CAS) commented:

“We have sensed and we have lived that changes are almost hard to make and there is always that idea, yeah they are six campuses and over the course of years whatever suggestions that you gave, it would clash with other colleges”

Under a centralized system similar to the one dominating the EAP curriculum at our colleges, changes which are aimed at developing the curriculum must first be approved by the Programme Director and upper authorities at the Ministry of Higher Education. With different academic specializations in each college, deciding on a particular strategy to develop the EAP curriculum is not being encouraged or supported by the decision makers. This very complex situation was communicated by Mansour (Male, Omani, 4 years at CAS) in the following excerpt:

“There is always this hesitation to take a proposal as it is simply because we have to keep the six colleges working at the same pace and achieving the same objectives. It will be very impossible for me for example to propose something which I think suits IT students and Engineering students and then say OK this is the right recipe. You can never come up with a recipe. I think this is why they are hesitant to take these

suggestions because they might simply not work in other colleges. So, there is always this hesitation”

The discussion presented in the previous comment indicates that the centralized top-down approach at CAS colleges stand in the way of any successful initiative towards curriculum development. This has led some colleges to deal with EAP curriculum challenges in their own way without waiting for the approval of decision makers or even communicating openly their suggested approach to the other CAS colleges. This was pointed out by Abdul Aziz who elaborated on this issue in the following comment:

“So yeah communicating changes was harder and the top-down resentment from like the PD because they say hey we can’t really change unless all the colleges change. Some colleges attempted change but never told anyone about it so it was just within college because they have sensed that something was wrong and we need to work on it not necessarily to be communicated with others but yeah let’s just do it here at least”

The emergence of various curriculum challenges in EAP courses at CAS requires introducing changes to the programme. The current situation under which each college is dealing separately with curriculum challenges is not healthy, particularly because students in all the six colleges will be subjected to the same assessment policies and will sit for a final examination which is centralized across the board. Noting that the continuous assessment and summative assessment of EAP courses are standardized, more communication should be encouraged to resolve any curricular arising issues. Therefore, this requires exerting more efforts to maintain channels of communication at all the levels; teachers, administrators and CAS colleges.

The following discussion will be focused on analyzing the second major challenge which will tackle curriculum planning related challenges.

5. 5. 2 Curriculum Planning related Challenges

The analysis of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews revealed that there are a number of challenges related to the process of curriculum planning and curriculum design in EAP courses. These challenges are classified in five sub-categories; issues related to assessing the learners' needs, issues related to programme goals and objectives, issues related to deciding the programme content, issues related to deciding an assessment plan to assess the students' performance, and the lack of an evaluation scheme for EAP courses.

5.5.2.1 Issues related to assessing the learners' needs

There are two main challenges which will be addressed under this category. The first issue relates to the gap between the students' current level and the expected level required by the course objectives. The second challenge relates to the lack of students' motivation which is also seen as a significant challenge and is believed to hinder EAP curriculum development.

Students' Low Proficiency level

The main challenge highlighted by the participants is the current gap between the students' proficiency level and the course objectives. EAP course objectives do not appear to address the learners' needs nor are aligned with their linguistic proficiency. In their answer to item (2) of the questionnaire, 51.8% of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed, 30.9% either strongly agreed or agreed and 16% neither agreed nor disagreed on EAP courses at CAS colleges being designed to suit the students' linguistic and academic needs. In spite of the diversity in the participants' views regarding the mismatch between the students' level and the course objectives, a large number of the participants seemed to be aware of the existence of some sort of incompatibility. In their answer to item (3) of the questionnaire a large number of the participants about 71.1% either strongly agreed or agreed that the main purpose of EAP courses at CAS should be

satisfying the linguistic demands of major departments. The issue about EAP course objectives is that these are not based on needs analysis but rather designed by decision makers. The significance of needs analysis in the context of the study was evident in the analysis of item (5) of the questionnaire to which a significant number of the participants about 77.9 % either strongly agreed or agreed that EAP courses at CAS should be informed by a needs analysis process. These course objectives have been in place for a number of years and have not been reviewed or revised since then. Course objectives should undergo a routine process of revision and evaluation to ensure these objectives are aligned with the students' current linguistic and academic needs. This alignment can also be effective in satisfying the evolving demands of the students' academic specializations. This issue was denoted to by Mansour (Male, Omani, 4 years' experience in CAS) in the following response:

"If we look at the objectives, these haven't been changed for a number of years, haven't been touched since the beginning and what teachers are trying to do on their own, it is their initiative to supplement what their curriculum can't offer to students based on the teachers' vision of what the students need"

The participants' responses to the open-ended section of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews were quite revealing on this regard. This is because a large number of the participants realized that one of the main challenges in the curriculum is the existing gap between the students' current proficiency level and the level expected of them as stipulated in the EAP course objectives. One of the participants related to this issue in responding to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire:

"There is a mismatch between the level of English proficiency learners assumed to have and the level they actually have. Many students don't have strong enough general English skills to engage effectively with the course"

Another participant also commented on the issue:

“The level of English proficiency is very low in comparison to the materials that are offered to the students and in relation to the assignments they are asked to complete. Mainly, the essay writing project is a problem because it is far above 90% of the students’ ability”

Based on the interview results, most teachers believe that the gap between the students’ proficiency level and the level expected of them according to the EAP course objectives constitutes a major hindrance in developing the EAP curriculum at the colleges. Bradley (Male, American, 1 year experience in CAS) commented:

“The fit between the students and the curriculum, there is more room for improvement there I guess. I think the curriculum is good for meeting the goals of the programme, but the students are not really able to use those materials effectively. There is a gap between the students’ competency level right now and the higher level of the curriculum”

This lack of the students’ competency level which was referred to by Bradley could be attributed to the issue of EAP courses originally not being established on a needs analysis and therefore the actual needs of the students aren’t being addressed.

Klara argued further:

“So, I would like a curriculum that is more realistic, that understands what level the students are at, and helps them to go from there. It felt like trying to get them to go from Kindergarten to grad school in one semester. And a lot of them were frustrated by it and I was frustrated by it. The curriculum isn’t suitable for the students”

The point being stressed in the previous comment is that student progress can be jeopardized if their actual needs are not carefully addressed in EAP course objectives.

Lack of Students' Motivation

One reasons why students feel they are not motivated in their classes is when the content of what is being taught or what is being asked of them is too challenging. In their answers to item (4) in the questionnaire, the majority of the participants of about 80% indicated that a learner-centered approach should be the guiding principle for EAP courses at CAS colleges. Though the learner-centered approach should be the underlying principle of the EAP programme, there are still some existing issues which need to be dealt with to ensure this approach is successfully implemented. Based on the analysis of the open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews, lack of student motivation in EAP courses is caused because the content of these courses is irrelevant to their academic needs which contradicts the objectives of the learner-centered approach. One of the participants provided an interesting response in the open-ended section of the questionnaire commenting:

“My EAP class uses three textbooks from the UK that are irrelevant to our Omani students’ lives. The students find these boring. I would like to spend class time doing more relevant student-centered activities”

This finding about the irrelevance of EAP teaching materials to the students is also supported by the participants’ responses in the semi-structured interviews. Muna (Female, Omani, 4 years in CAS) commented:

“They are all talking how these courses are becoming really boring for the students, not really addressing what they need, talking about other materials which can be useful to them”

Another factor contributing to the issue of lack of students’ motivation is that students are not involved in the curriculum. We expect them to receive the curriculum and we never consider asking them for their feedback on their needs, their preferences and their suggestions. This point was clearly indicated by Dina (Female, British, 8 years in CAS) in the following quote:

“Surely there are end users of our product. We should be asking them. We don’t have feedback from them. We don’t get feedback from students who passed the course or have done these kinds of things. So, I think our feedback process isn’t the one that should be”

Consideration of student feedback on their needs in EAP courses can be seen as a way to get students more engaged within the courses and ultimately enhance their motivation in EAP classes. Mansour (Male, Omani, 4 years in CAS) explained:

“So, I think teachers should play a major role in curriculum development then comes the students who can to some degree speak about their specific needs in the classrooms. As an English teacher I will never be able to tell or totally tell the students’ needs in an engineering classroom. That is maybe something I should be somehow preparing my students for. So, my only contact point here is I sit with the students and listen to what they need”

The point implied by Mansour is that students should be more involved in curriculum through listening to what they need and considering their feedback.

Muna (Female, Omani, 4 years in CAS) alluded to another significant factor which she sees as contributing to the issue of lack of students’ motivation in EAP courses. She stated:

“Teachers could even sense that students are not interested in their classes. It should not be this way really, having replicated syllabus and assessment for various EAP courses which are meant to be different to develop the students’ academic and linguistic skills from one course to another. This is why students get bored”

Although more discussion will be provided under the category specified for tackling assessment issues, having replicated assessment in EAP courses has influenced students’ motivation in EAP courses. The findings indicate there is a need to

review assessment procedures to assure the existence of a clear progress plan that can be measured for every course. Teachers can develop an awareness of the students' needs and preferred learning styles through their frequent contact with the students. Therefore, they can either use differentiated instructional methods or supplementary materials to maximize students' motivation.

5.5.2.2 Issues related to programme goals and objectives

In the previous discussion, we discussed that according to the participants' views the current EAP course objectives do not appear to address the actual needs of the learners. This section will provide a deeper investigation on issues related to the existing EAP course objectives as revealed from the findings. The current EAP course objectives were designed a number of years ago by a former programme director. According to the previous policy which was implemented during his service in the Ministry, he was responsible for designing course objectives, assessment procedures, and then discussing them with a panel of Heads of English Departments and level coordinators. Whatever issues related to the EAP courses objectives will only be discussed at the level of decision makers who in this case were the programme director, HODs of English departments and level coordinators. They attend meetings at the Ministry and can be updated on issues concerning course objectives. After the former PD left, another PD took over and she is actually used a different policy. Since she held the position, no change has been made to the course objectives as well as the other curriculum elements.

The qualitative analysis of the interviews showed that there is awareness among EAP teachers that one of the main curriculum challenges in the EAP courses, lies in the lack of a systematic process to review the currently implemented course objectives which according to the teachers need to be modified. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) provided a clear explanation on the issue commenting:

"If we have a culture of collaboration, a culture of providing constant update aligning the goals, the goals are a little outdated, a little

unrealizable and unachievable. Let's have something in this place, something better, something that will be much more useful not only to bringing a change to the course but even beyond that to the lives of the students"

The previous excerpt reveals there is an issue within the current EAP course objectives which need to be modified to cater for the students' actual needs and the emerging needs of the other academic specializations which our EAP programme is supposed to prepare the students for. According to the analysis of the findings, issues related to the EAP programme goals and objectives were classified into three main categories which are EAP or ESP, Textbook driven course objectives, knowledge base orientation of curriculum.

EAP or ESP

In the context of the study the approach of the EAP programme at CAS colleges whether EGAP or ESAP is a matter decided by the institutional authorities. The main aim of establishing EAP courses was to prepare students linguistically and academically for their academic specializations. In their responses to (item 4) in the questionnaire, 80% of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed on a learner-centered approach as the guiding educational principal for EAP courses at the colleges. It was stated earlier that the actual needs of the learners are not being met because EAP courses were not designed based on a systematic process of needs analysis but on the perceived needs decided by decision makers. It cannot be said that the current EAP programme does not prepare students for their majors because there is evidence to suggest there is a level of competency. However, there are still other linguistic and academic needs which should be addressed by these courses. The majority of the participants alluded to the importance of integrating ESP materials since they regarded the current EAP courses as quite general not attending to the learners' actual needs required by their academic disciplines.

One of the participants stressed this issue in the open-ended questions in the questionnaire: The comment put forward suggested:

“There must be courses like (English for IT), (English for Engineering)...etc. Since all the higher education institutions in Oman are targeting the same general goal, the Ministry of Higher Education needs to cooperate with Technology Colleges in Oman as they have a clearer curriculum and plans”

The previous response exposes part of the issue within the EAP teacher experience in relation to the current curriculum. Our EAP courses are quite general in terms of the topics covered in the textbooks, learning tasks and activities required by students in the classroom. The only link with the students' subject specializations is made through the formative assessment project which requires the students to write a one thousand words essay in a topic related to their majors. Most of the participants indicated there should be more relevance to the students' academic disciplines and they also reported a number of issues pertaining to the formative and summative assessment plans which will be further discussed in the following sections.

The responses of the participants in the semi-structured interviews complemented the findings of the open-ended questions in this respect. Helen (Female, British, 3 years in CAS) pinpointed that the source of the problem with the current curriculum is that *“A lot of materials are totally unrelated for anything they will ever come across.”* Helen seems to be right since all the topics presented in the current EAP textbooks though of academic nature, are still general and do not relate to the students' majors. Basma (Female, Omani, 7 years in CAS) provided a thoughtful assessment on this issue. She added:

“For me the issue in these courses isn't a matter of challenge. It is a matter of relevance. It is funny that some of these courses are called ESP courses like they are supposed to be for special purposes. So, IT students are supposed to study materials or courses related to IT but this isn't

happening. The same thing with Business students, they study exactly the same books, same materials, same vocabulary so how can we call this EAP. Yes, I understand that at the beginning we should have some extent of general curriculum, and then we go more specific towards the end but this isn't happening"

As indicated in the previous response, the current EAP programme though is aimed at developing the students' abilities to understand and express complex ideas on academic topics, it does not fully address the students' linguistic and academic needs. Despite the last EAP course at CAS being titled, English for Specific Purposes, it is not essentially an ESP course as it does not fulfill its main objective which is providing exposure to subject-specific genres and lexis (English for Academic Purposes, Student's Handbook, 2016).

Most of the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews support the students' need for these kinds of EAP courses provided at the colleges but these courses require further development to cater to subject-specific content of students' academic disciplines. It is vital to create an alignment in our EAP programme to ensure that there is consistency between the existing course objectives and the rising curricular demands of the subject academic departments. However, the complexity associated with this alignment approach should determine to what extent EAP courses should either be more geared towards the vocational orientation of the job market or the academic orientation of the subject specializations.

Textbook Driven Course Objectives

There is another issue which was revealed in relation to the EAP programme goals and objectives. Currently, course objectives are textbook-oriented not based on a needs analysis process which is seen as an integral element in the planning and design of EAP programmes. One of the participants related to this issue in the open-ended questions of the questionnaire stating:

“Existing EAP courses are solely built around textbooks rather than independent and well-designed learning objectives. Our look at ‘a course’ should move beyond a textbook, where the former is carefully planned around the learners’ needs and the latter is simply used as a learning tool. Plus the fact those EAP textbooks (or any other textbooks) might very likely have linear objectives to be achieved within a suggested time frame, a time frame that doesn’t necessarily go in line with the course objectives”

The previous response indicates that one of the issues pertaining to the current EAP course aims and objectives is that these are being decided by higher authorities of what they consider to fall within ‘the perceived needs’ of the learners. Decision makers in the context of the study appear to agree on the current textbooks matching the course objectives of the EAP programme. It would seem a great deal of the skills being emphasized in the course objectives are solely driven from the currently implemented textbooks. The following excerpt from the interview with Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) seems to indicate that EAP course objectives are based on the textbooks.

He commented:

“The other thing is that apparently something I sensed was that the whole goals and objectives are solely driven from the textbooks. They were not programme driven, they are not like Ok that is what we want to do, and these are our plans and these are the working procedures to reach those plans no”

In the same vein, Ameer (Male, Omani, 4 years in CAS) shared a similar concern on the textbook driven course objectives for which he provided the following quote:

“All we have to do is follow rules and it is also interesting that you have mentioned textbooks and course objectives. We should have objectives before textbooks but in our case, it is the other way around. We have textbooks and based on these textbooks we draw our objectives. So, for instance, if a textbook doesn’t include a certain element in linguistics, we

will definitely not see it in our course objectives. So, it should be the other way around. We should start with objectives and based on the objectives we choose books but in reality based on the books we draw our objectives. This is how I see it”

The analysis of the interviews indicated that a significant majority of the participants believe that the current textbook orientation of the EAP programme requires further revision and evaluation. This is due to the currently used textbooks having been in place for a long time and not being reviewed since then. This adherence to the textbooks does not account for the emerging needs of the students and the rising demands of the students' academic disciplines. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) referred to the knowledge-based orientation which focuses on the content of EAP textbooks rather than the academic skills the students require to develop. He clarified this issue in the following comment:

“My orientation, I am not a guy who is oriented towards building knowledge and stuff. I think knowledge comes from experience and exposure. I am a guy who is oriented towards projects because I believe in the power of involving the students in a particular task. That particular task will offer the scenario where the language is going to be used but beyond that students are going to have something much more sustainable and much more lasting than focusing on the knowledge. So, I would really like to be more oriented towards fostering skill base rather than knowledge base which I think somehow is of a misfortune in the way EAP curriculum is offered. There is more focus on knowledge rather than skills”

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews indicated that most of the participants have realized that the current textbook orientation approach which is adopted in the EAP programme is not effective because it contradicts the learner-centered approach. More focus should be directed in the area of materials design which necessitates EAP teachers be trained on how to design their materials to supplement the gaps within the EAP commercial

textbooks. Further analysis and investigation will be provided on the issue of the textbooks in the following section.

5.5.2.3 Issues related to deciding the programme content

According to the research findings, the challenges under this category will be classified into three sub-challenges; teachers' dissatisfaction with the textbooks, inconsistent use of supplementary materials and lack of effective use of technology in EAP courses.

Teachers' Dissatisfaction with the Textbooks

It was revealed through the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire (item 6) that 55.5% of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed with learning resources such as textbooks and visual resources being sufficient to enhance the students' academic proficiency. The more we proceed with analyzing curriculum challenges, the firmer my conviction becomes in regards to curriculum elements being interrelated and influencing each other. Though, we have discussed earlier an agreement among the participants on the current EAP course objectives not incorporating the demands of the students' major studies, this same issue has also emerged in the discussion on the course materials. This kind of interrelatedness which was evident in the analysis confirms that curriculum elements cannot be approached separately without having awareness on the interactive relationship which exists among them. The current approach of the programme which is supposed to be clearly translated in the course objectives has not been modified to address the issue of non-relevance to academic subject areas. One of the responses introduced in the open-ended questions in the questionnaire related to this issue. The comment was, *"The materials in the first year should be content-based and should reflect the vocabulary they encounter in their major."* It was further suggested in another response that there is a need to establish

“contextualized materials that meet the major specifications and the linguistic level of the students.”

The issue of teachers' dissatisfaction with the current textbooks is one of the main challenges which affect curriculum development in the context of the study particularly since the majority of the participants indicated their dissatisfaction with the existing materials. This is because there seems to be a gap between the textbooks and the current course objectives. Dina (Female, British, 8 years in CAS) explained, *“I think particularly I choose things for the foundation year and first year. I have done EAP courses; neither of the textbooks that we have is good for the purpose.”* Most of participants agree that EAP course books are general and do not provide the students with the sufficient preparation required by academic subject areas. Mansour (Male, Omani, 4 years in CAS) commented on this issue stating:

“....A lot of these textbooks are not designed for IT and Engineering. I am trying to bridge the gap between what the students are doing and what the students are interested in at their majors and what this course has to offer, because I know these textbooks somehow meet the course objectives”

From my own experience about the issue, the current EAP textbooks have been selected to match the main objective for EAP courses which is enhancing the students' linguistic and academic proficiency and enabling them to cope with their major studies. There is a match between the course books and the course objectives but it may not be 100% match. This is why most of the EAP teachers tend to either adapt or design a lot of supplementary materials. One problem with the textbooks selection is the influence of external factors which relate to the lack of proper EAP textbooks. One of the responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire denoted exactly to this particular issue, *“Textbooks, we don't have the so-called EAP books, and they are difficult to locate either way.”* In the context of the CAS colleges, the textbooks' selection is mainly decided by the programme director which means teachers have not been consulted for their

feedback when the current series of textbooks was first selected. Ahmed (Male, Omani, 6 years in CAS) provided more insight on the issue of textbooks' selection in the EAP programme. He stated:

"In these courses, we are mostly adopting some of the textbooks that have been produced for commercial purposes, something that has been published for example by Pearson or by Oxford University Press which is dedicated for educational purposes. So the designer of the curriculum is someone who is not part of the colleges but the selection has been based on what we have come up as desired goals and we think that these textbooks will suit these objectives. So, this is how it works"

Ahmed worked as an HOD for the English department in one of the CAS colleges and his comment indicated that decision makers are aware of teachers' dissatisfaction with the textbooks but changing textbooks appears to be difficult under the rigid centralized leadership at CAS colleges particularly since each college has different academic specializations. Another issue relating to the teachers' dissatisfaction with the textbooks is that the content of these textbooks is not relevant to the learners' cultural backgrounds. A participant commented in the open-ended questions on the questionnaire, *"My EAP class uses three textbooks from the UK which are irrelevant to our Omani students' lives. The students find these boring. I would like to spend class time doing more relevant, student-centered activities."* The issue of EAP textbooks' cultural irrelevance was further alluded to in the semi-structured interviews. Sheikha (Female, Omani, 6 years in CAS) who is currently working as the Head of English Department in one of the CAS colleges speculated on the issue of the textbooks suggesting that this issue requires a deep investigation on the contextual and external factors which influence how EAP curriculum should be approached. She commented:

"If we are going to look at the reading textbook for example, it could meet the academic skills but it is not related to Oman so whatever they read they don't have the background about the context that they are reading about. So, we might have like academic reading texts but they

could be related to the Omani society or maybe the Gulf society or something that they know about so that you can see the students' skills, knowledge appears there. And they can feel the sense of belonging that this textbook belongs to us and I need to read it, I need to have a look at it in order to do my requirements"

The above discussed issues pertaining to the EAP teachers' dissatisfaction with the currently implemented textbooks indicate that the unavailability of technically specific and culturally appropriate course materials constitute a hindrance to EAP curriculum development at the colleges.

Inconsistent use of supplementary materials

Questionnaire results (item 8) indicated that 65.5% of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed that EAP teachers are encouraged to develop supplementary materials for EAP courses. This finding was further supported by the analysis of the semi-structured interviews in which the majority of the participants reported that they use a lot of supplementary materials which are either adapted or designed in their EAP classes and also indicated they found them quite effective to enhance the students' learning process. Though the use of supplementary materials which is being adopted by most of the EAP teachers can be regarded as an effective curricular approach to fill the gap in the course books, there is another challenging aspect which needs to be addressed. The analysis of item (9) in the questionnaire indicated that 51.8% of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed that supplementary materials designed by teachers are being evaluated and incorporated into the EAP courses. Throughout my experience at CAS as an EAP coordinator, despite teachers not being involved in areas of curriculum planning and design, they still have a space of freedom as teachers in their classrooms. Their perception of using supplementary materials to support students' learning is one of the elements included within their scope of freedom. If the purpose behind using supplementary materials is to provide more

practice for the students through the use of various in-class activities then teachers should be encouraged to do that. However, if the supplementary materials are used by teachers to fill an existing gap in the established curriculum such as the lack of contextualized subject-specific materials, this should be standardized across the six colleges. This doesn't mean EAP teachers cannot be trusted to develop contextualized subject-specific materials but this form of curricular endeavor will require further channels of collaboration with subject teachers in major departments to ensure the relevance of the materials. Zuhair (Male, Egyptian, more than 10 years in CAS) commented on this issue of using supplementary materials:

“But, instead of leaving it to the teacher to do that, I think it will be good if it was part of the course, for every day. Exactly, because there can be some differences, so it will be good if it is standardized”

The issue of standardization in the context of CAS colleges as suggested by Zuhair is quite important. Some of these materials should be reviewed for their relevance and effectiveness particularly if they are subject-specific. EAP teachers tend to think of using supplementary materials as the only way by which they can contribute in developing the curriculum. They may have thought that the unresolved curriculum issues such as the lack of subject-specific materials as well as the insufficient focus on some academic and linguistic skills can be solved by using supplementary materials. The use of supplementary materials needs to be regulated among EAP teachers to maximize their effectiveness and to ensure all the students receive equal learning experiences. The following excerpt by Amjad (Male, Syrian, 3 years in CAS) shows the complexity related to the use of supplementary materials by EAP teachers. He stated:

“I’m a big fan of debating skills and I always have this game. I get the students in two groups and I give them a group work and I make them into teams and I assign a team leader, and the two teams need to debate. With this kind of activity, I try to address skills that the book does not work on which is like team work skills. This skill is a core professional

skill but not a core academic skill. This is the difference between academic study skills and professional skills. We are getting graduates ready for the labor market. This is the gap. So, I do these activities and usually I get like controversial topics for students to discuss and debate. The level coordinator takes my suggestions and uses my activities in her class but we share these materials informally”

The previous excerpt indicates that Amjad has an awareness of the existence of some curricular gaps which he refers to as insufficient ‘core professional skills’ and more effort is required to allow EAP teachers to provide their constructive feedback on the existing gaps in the implemented textbooks. EAP teachers should also be encouraged to collaborate on the use of supplementary materials so a set of effective materials can be produced and circulated across the CAS colleges.

“Integrating much technology” in EAP

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews showed that some participants believe technology is not being effectively used in EAP courses to enhance the curriculum. Despite that technology being a requirement in listening classes as students either listen to or watch a video through audio and visual resources, some participants feel more technological integration is essential. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) commented:

“The course definitely needs evaluation. EAP has been since I joined almost completed six years and a half, given that doing the same thing with the same goals, with same objectives, come on, at least our students mindset with the whole technology infusion, we are not doing much about that, we are not integrating much technology which might make it much more appealing example to them”

Abdul Aziz referred to the need to integrate more technology in EAP courses. Our students have a good knowledge of the use of Blackboard, which is an electronic portal through which they submit their final written projects. They are also being provided with some opportunities oriented towards enhancing their learning

experiences in the multi-media language labs. However, the challenging aspect associated with the current use of technology can be summed up by Dina (Female, British, 8 years in CAS) in the following comment:

“I think sometimes we go for technology for the sake of technology, it must be binged on the screen, it must be this, it must be a video, I think we spend a lot of time to put technology in between us and our students. It is a misunderstanding of using technology in the classroom”

The main challenge as represented in Dina’s comment is the lack of effective on-line activities which are oriented towards developing higher order thinking skills rather than the current basic computer based exercises adopted at EAP listening sessions.

Dina added:

“But, there are other things I have taught where for example we’ve got tense buster in the lab and you must get your students to do this. My students hate it because it is boring because they just read, click, choose an answer, and there is no interaction. So, for me I think we don’t probably have as many things as we would like to but what we have we made do it. I think we don’t want to get in this drive where it is just technology for technology’s sake. If we have more technology, it should be useful and it should be focused on the students’ needs than just focusing on the smart board because it looks nice”

According to Dina, technology integration should be carefully planned as the use of technology can enhance teaching and learning rather than using technology for technology’s sake.

5.5.2.4 Issues related to students' assessment procedures

The participants discussed a variety of challenges which relate to the existing continuous assessment scheme and the final examination scheme. With respect to the continuous assessment scheme, students are required to write an essay on a topic related to their majors. They are required to do an in-class presentation and by the end of the course, submit a final written essay which equals 50% of their grade in the course. The second part of the assessment is the final examination scheme which is characterized by its fixed format and is based on testing the students' knowledge on what they have covered and acquired from the textbooks.

Issues related to continuous assessment

One of the major issues with the existing continuous assessment as indicated by the analysis of the quantitative and the qualitative data is that the current level is above the students' ability. One of the responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire referred to this issue. The participant stated:

"The students' language proficiency is too low for the level of research and writing they are expected to do. Most students are barely literate in English and can't write 3-4 consecutive grammatically correct sentences on an academic topic, so it is unfathomable that they should be asked to read research and form it into 800 words essay"

This same idea was supported in the semi-structured interviews by Klara (Female, American, 1 year in CAS) who commented:

"And the essay I found not for all of them but for most of them is far too difficult. A lot of them were still struggling with writing sentences even at year 2"

These findings point out one of the issues with the current continuous assessment that it does not consider the actual students' proficiency level and requires them to tackle a higher level demanding writing task. The situation is complex and as

noted earlier; the assessment must be aligned with our main objectives along with our expectations from students. There is a lot of focus directed to the project in terms of marks but at the same time we require the students to learn how to write various genres of academic essays as those included in the academic writing book. This shows a gap between the kind of writing we focus on throughout the whole course and the academic essays which students will be tested on in the final exam. In essence, there are too many objectives for the course and we are expecting students to be linguistically and academically capable of attaining satisfactory level of academic achievement.

Another issue with the existing continuous assessment scheme in EAP courses is that there does not seem to be a clear progress plan for the assessment in EAP courses. We have mentioned previously how students are expected to study four EAP courses; two courses offered in the first academic year and two courses offered in the second academic year. The assessment issues related to these courses are similar to the continuous assessment plan in their design. Basma (Female, Omani, 7 years in CAS) reflected on the issue of lack of variation in the assessment plan for EAP courses:

“For example, I get frustrated with the project. Students are asked to write 1200 words like a report. They choose a topic from their own major. If they are Business students, they write Business related topic, IT the same thing. And this kind of project is repeated over the four EAP semesters, and there is no variation in assessment, always the same and students recycle the topics from their own projects, from other students’ projects and from other colleges and they do it without even trying to grasp the purpose of it because they see it as just another assignment which is repeated”

This lack of variation in the continuous assessment makes it difficult for teachers and students as well to track if there is any progress in the learning process from one course to another. There is strong evidence that this particular continuous assessment scheme should be reviewed and evaluated for its validity and

effectiveness. Development of communication channels and the establishment of collaborative partnerships with subject teachers in the process of designing continuous assessment will help to maximize its effectiveness. Helen (Female, British, 3 years in CAS) talked about the need for consulting subject teachers to ensure the effectiveness of the continuous assessment commenting:

“For example, we give them a project to write which is good. They get projects in the business department as well but there is no communication between the business department and us so I don’t know if we are duplicating things and if they are giving them projects in business why we are giving them projects in business. It is all the wrong way around”

The issue of setting collaborative partnerships with subject teachers is highly significant and it primarily refers back to the previous discussion on what goes within the curriculum planning stage. Solving continuous assessment issues requires reviewing objectives to ensure there is an alignment between the course objectives and the assessment procedures. The continuous assessment needs frequent evaluation and changes and will require involving EAP teachers who have established awareness about assessment related issues and can contribute in designing a more effective continuous assessment plan for EAP courses.

Another relevant issue which deserves attention in regards to continuous assessment is the lack of clarity in the course objectives particularly for the project’s specific requirements. Mansour (Male, Omani, 4 years in CAS) explained the issue of lack of clarity commenting:

“This also applies for the project where one of the objectives says students should be introduced to primary research. It doesn’t tell you specifically what primary research they need. This is what led some teachers for example to push students to do a primary research by including a number of students or using a number of research tools say for example, surveys, questionnaires, interviews and so on”

As discussed by Mansour, there is a great deal of ambiguity with regards to understanding the specifications of the continuous assessment on the part of the teachers. The current lack of structure among EAP teachers on how they should go about teaching the project will generate further issues which will eventually influence the students' intended learning.

A similar view about the issue with lack of clarity in relation to the continuous assessment project was further alluded to by Kamil (Male, Omani, 3 Years at CAS) who stated that:

“Students are asked to write a report starting from year 1 when they join their majors but I think there is no clear way of how to write a report. There is no improvement and students move from semester 1 to semester 2, they will find another teacher and that teacher will use another way of writing report. There is no consistent way of writing report. So, each semester students find some differences, so there is no consistency. I mean that students should have a clear idea about the structure, and the right format of writing a report”

One of the challenging aspects related to the continuous assessment which was referred to by a small number of the participants is the issue of plagiarism in the students' final written projects. Ameer (Male, Omani, 4 years in CAS) stated his views on this issue:

“Another thing is that all teachers face is cheating. Very few students genuinely write their own projects and the majority copy from the internet which I think is a problem. They don't benefit. They don't get the research skills”

A similar perspective on the issue of plagiarism was provided by Sumaya (Female, Omani, 5 years in CAS). She stated:

“For the project we have 30 marks and the students most of the time they ask somebody else to do it or they use Google translation or I don’t know they copy it from other sources”

The issue of plagiarism has been one of the recurring issues witnessed by EAP teachers including myself. The existence of this problem is well known however, no solutions have been discussed in a systematic way. There should be further research to discover the main reasons behind plagiarism along with the reason why it is common among students. One identified reason is that students do not know the correct way to use the referencing conventions which are not included or incorporated in our curriculum. It has been left for teachers to decide on the referencing style they believe most convenient which is not an effective strategy. Teachers feel disconnected because they are not allowed to propose any changes to the current prescribed curriculum so they may feel reluctant to give their feedback and instead they choose to do whatever they feel is the best for their students. This issue was further indicated by Zuhair (Male, Egyptian, 10 years in CAS) who stated:

“Plagiarism is a problem here at the college so we need to identify why plagiarism is a problem, we need to solve that which is linked to referencing, I think if they understand how to reference, this will help the area of plagiarism because they don’t intend to plagiarize but they just need to know how not to plagiarize. So, by focusing on these things I think, it will make the curriculum a little bit more effective”

The second reason why our students tend to plagiarize in their written projects is because we focus on the final product rather than focusing on the process of writing. Much emphasis is focused on the content of the output and the research skills whereas in practice very little emphasis is directed on how students should perform this task. Providing students more time in the classroom to practice their writing skills can contribute in developing their writing skills and consequently reduce the chances of plagiarizing.

In addition to the reasons discussed earlier, another significant issue to be considered is the replicated nature of the continuous assessment. It was earlier noted, the findings in the continuous assessment revealed that all of the EAP courses provided at CAS colleges require students to work on a project related to their major with no clear varied specifications to indicate whether students are progressing or getting any benefit from this course assignment. If the students are tasked with the same objective each semester, it should not be a surprise for them to plagiarize their work. Plagiarism could be committed because students are bored and do not see any real benefit in this form of continuous assessment. Plagiarism in this context is not always directly taking information from the internet. In a number of instances, students have been known to recycle the same project submitted by other students in a previous EAP course or by using another student's submitted written projects.

CAS colleges have sought to minimize plagiarism through the use of an online facility in Google docs, though the problem still persists in EAP courses. Since academic writing constitutes a large element in the EAP curriculum at CAS, there is need to provide more support for the students in this area. Teachers should be consulted to obtain their views on the preferred teaching practices which can promote students writing proficiency in EAP courses. There is a need to start with reviewing our assessment schemes and initiate the required changes to ensure the development of a clear progress plan to track and assess the progress of our students' academic writing skills from one level to another.

Issues with Final Exams

In addition to the challenges which relate to the existing continuous assessment plan discussed earlier, the findings also indicated a number of issues with regards to the final examination in EAP courses. It was previously stated that EAP teachers are not involved in the design of assessment procedures. There is a fixed structure for the final exam and assessment coordinators are the only teachers

who are allowed to write the final exam. Muna (Female, Omani, 4 in CAS) has some experience of working as an assessment coordinator. She was largely involved in writing final exams for EAP courses and she commented:

“In terms of assessment as you may know, you have an assessment coordinator in each college. So, we have six assessment coordinators. Each assessment coordinator is assigned to write an exam for each semester. So, people in Sohar might be in charge of writing the final exam for ENAP1001 and people in Ibri might be in charge of writing ENAP1002. So, it is a matter of assigning each college to write one final exam per semester. For example, I wrote the final exam for EANP1002 and it doesn't mean that I'm not involved in the other exams. After writing the final exam for ENAP1002, I'm going to send it to the other colleges to receive their comments and finally their approval, approval of level coordinators and assessment coordinators but teachers are not involved. Sometimes, some level coordinators might pass the final exam to one or two trusted teachers to give their feedback and their comments on the exam but most of the teachers are not involved”

The previous excerpt gives a clear indication on how assessment procedures including continuous assessment and the final exam for EAP courses are being managed by decision makers. From my own experience as an EAP teacher and a level coordinator, those assigned administrative roles in the department such as HODs, level coordinators could give their feedback on the final exam regarding the content and not the format as the structure of final exams is fixed. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews indicated that many EAP teachers wanted to take part in the final exam. Helen (Female, British, 3 years in CAS) reflected on this issue:

“Even the assessment thing annoys me because I have never been asked to look at an exam paper and every year we have the exam papers I find those issues and I get cross so why as a native speaker why was I not involved in looking at them. Recently we had one where

there was a listening exam and there was an issue with the quality of sound but the other issue was the language level was too high for the students, and the people who have done the speaking and listening test were new teachers who haven't taught here. So, had they used someone more experienced, they might be able to say this is too difficult for the students and that was one class I invigilated and it was just really ridiculous. The quality bad and the materials were too difficult and no input from us"

The issue of teachers' non-involvement in writing or evaluation of final exams in EAP courses is important. Assessment is an integral element of our curriculum and it helps in assessing the performance of our students in these courses. In order to develop the curriculum, we need to consider the existing assessment issues and find a better strategy to increase their quality, validity, and effectiveness. Another issue which needs some attention here is to understand whether assessment coordinators have the required knowledge which enables them to design or write final exams. Even if EAP assessment coordinators have developed a full awareness about the context related to the students and the curriculum, training them on the area of exam writing will contribute in minimizing issues of exam quality and validity. As Hellen mentioned in the previous excerpt, *"had they used someone more experienced"*, they may be able to get sound and constructive feedback on issues related to final exams. Most of the assessment coordinators are Omani teachers with varied teaching experiences. In my opinion, they still require a different level of experience or knowledge which relates to the fundamental elements of writing exams. Hamed (Male, Omani, 10 years in CAS) provided his view on this issue by commenting:

"So if our teachers don't have the experience of writing a quiz, how can they write a final exam? Unfortunately, maybe some are happy because they are doing nothing. I'm not writing exams, everything is easy, but I think in the future they will feel that these colleges have not helped them

to develop professionally especially in exam writing which I feel is part of our teaching. Assessment is part of our teaching”

The interpretation provided by Hamed shows that the issue of teacher involvement in exam writing is not only related to curriculum development but it provides an opportunity for teachers to develop their skills and refine their professional practice. With respect to the issue of writing exams, assessment coordinators are nominated or selected from teachers who have a full awareness of the context along with curriculum and have expressed their willingness to take part in the administrative board of the department. At the same time, the current structure is only for HODs, level coordinators and assessment coordinators to have access to final exams. Thus, if more teachers are involved in the exam writing process, the confidentiality of the exam may be at risk. In my view of the context, a solution to the recurrent issues with final exam writing is to provide specialized workshops or training oriented for developing the knowledge and skills of assessment coordinators in the areas of assessment and particularly exam writing.

Another issue revealed in the final exams of EAP courses via the semi-structured interviews is that the existing rating scales are not being evaluated for their validity in the EAP programme. Though this allusion to the issue with rating scales has been indicated by one participant, it is significant in relation to EAP curriculum development. Throughout my work as a level coordinator numerous teachers used to complain about the final exam rubrics. As level coordinators, we could not change or modify the rubrics because they are to be standardized across all the six colleges and initiating any change to the rubrics will require an approval from the ministry which is difficult and impractical. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years of experience) provided a speculative account about the issue related to the use of the exam rubrics. He commented:

“I remember I had issue with some of the rubrics, assessment rubrics and I used to fight about that, I used to argue. Some teachers will say hey you have rated that student really high. Well, that is based on the rubrics because we are all on the same page. Some local teachers would

be hey he shouldn't deserve that, well yeah in reality that student doesn't deserve that but from the rubric that I have, it matches so that maybe a problem whether you are relying on experience on judging people or you are relying on a piece of paper that is in front of you. There is leniency in the rubrics, like hardly any students will be placed below 15. They are like between the 16, and the 23, that will be the cluster. So, there is more on their favor than the favor of the programme"

The issue of validity of final exam rubrics which relates particularly to the writing section is so important. This untested validity of rubrics has been also apparent in the continuous assessment since it was referred to by another participant in the semi-structured interviews. Amjad (Male, Syerian, 3 years in CAS) commented:

"The major problem at CAS lies in assessment. Literally speaking the assessment is designed to make students pass"

All the assessment related issues discussed earlier require a process of reviewing assessment schemes, including their objectives, their design, and their validity. This is because if these issues are underestimated, they will be actually preventing any curriculum development from happening. We need to fill the existing gap with assessment by involving EAP experienced teachers who have been at CAS for quite some time. The institution should work to involve senior teachers and respond to their feedback in order to determine an action plan to deal with the current assessment issues. In my opinion, the ministry's approach to deal with assessment related issues should be seeking the assistance of assessment experts as well as providing specialized assessment workshops for EAP teachers to provide them with the required assessment literacy to enable them to make sound judgements about students' performance.

5.5.2.5 The Need for a Programme Evaluation Scheme

Evaluation is seen as an important process which should influence the planning and the implementation of curriculum. Nation and Macalister (2010) argue that evaluating a course should be aimed at all aspects of curriculum design to reach sound judgments about the effectiveness of the curriculum. In the context of the study, evaluation of EAP courses is narrowly focused on one aspect of the curriculum which is the students' assessment and very little is being done to evaluate the other curriculum elements. As indicated through the analysis of the questionnaire, a significant majority of the EAP teachers (84% in item 15) either strongly agreed or agreed on curriculum development requiring systematic evaluation of various curriculum elements. This gives a clear indication that the majority of participants believe in the importance of evaluating the curriculum which is seen as an integral element of the process of curriculum development.

The kind of programme evaluation which is being executed across the colleges is basically focused on allowing certain people to provide their feedback about areas of improvement in EAP courses. As a level coordinator at Sohar College, only HODs, level coordinators and assessment coordinators are asked about their general feedback on the EAP courses. They are required to write a report to be submitted to the Programme Director by the end of every semester. As explained earlier, the English programme at CAS colleges operate under a top-down leadership which means that the final say regarding any curricular changes will be from the Programme Director. This fact was supported by the participants' responses in the questionnaire for which a large number of the participants (67% in item 7) either strongly disagreed or disagreed on their involvement in the revision and evaluation of existing course outlines. Similarly, the analysis of item (14) indicated that 45.6% of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed, 29.6% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 23.5% either strongly agreed or agreed that EAP teachers are encouraged to develop various curriculum elements. The qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed that the majority of the participants suspect the existence of an evaluation scheme for

EAP programmes at CAS colleges. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) reflected:

“The course definitely needs evaluation. EAP has been since I joined almost completed six years and a half, given that doing the same thing with the same goals, with the same objectives..”

One of the interesting facts about evaluation at CAS colleges as mentioned by one of the participants in the interviews is the college administration’s insistence on teachers urging students to fill out a survey for each module. Students are asked about their feedback on the course in general and about the instructor of the course. However, teachers are not asked for their feedback about the course and they do not know what happens with the results of the surveys filled out by students every semester. In relation to this issue of the lack of a programme evaluation scheme, Basma (Female, Omani, 7 years in CAS) commented:

“Students are given questionnaires, this is not regular to evaluate teachers and the courses and so on, but what happens after that, we don’t know. So, this is like a students’ based evaluation and teachers are not updated about the results of these surveys but it is only for the administration feedback. Teachers also are not asked about their feedback after teaching the course”

Some participants referred to the lack of teacher evaluation at EAP courses which is also associated with the issue of lack of a programme evaluation. Hamed clarified this issue further in the following comment:

“If there is a problem with a teacher, they shouldn’t overburden all the teachers with extra work which is really not needed. You should sit with them, talk to them, and give them the right piece of advice. I think because they don’t do this, they try to generalize. I don’t think that this model is helping curriculum development of EAP courses”

Based on my reflection on the issue of formative teachers' evaluation which seems to be suggested in the previous quote, this issue can influence curriculum development. Despite EAP teachers being aware of the summative evaluation which takes the form of an annual appraisal completed by HODs, this form has not been effective due to a lack of transparency. EAP teachers have no idea of the results of this evaluation and therefore it cannot be seen as an effective evaluation method. Regarding formative teacher evaluation, there is no structure or a framework for this kind of evaluation which means there is a need to establish a proper teacher evaluation method for EAP teachers at CAS colleges.

Another significant remark referred to by Hamed (Male, Omani, 10 years in CAS) with respect to evaluation is that evaluation should support the course objectives because if the evaluation indicates that a curricular change is to be made, then this change has to result in modifying and refining the course objectives. He discussed this issue in the following quote:

“As I said here, any curriculum if we talk about developing a curriculum which we have been teaching let's say for the past 7 or 8 years maybe needs to be updated based on the learners' needs, based on what improvement that takes place even in their majors. If they require from them certain skills, English for Academic Purposes, If they say now we ask them to write this kind of reports or essays, what we teach here in English maybe should relate to what they need. So, we need here to evaluate our curriculum, is it matching the requirements or not? If we think in general and we talk about the generic skills for English for Academic Purposes maybe, there are always changes and improvements. So we need I think to evaluate this yes. As I said based on this maybe we need to change the aims and objectives of what we are teaching”

Another interesting point represented by Sheikha (Female, Omani, 6 years in CAS) in relation to the issue of evaluation is the form of evaluation initiated by the institution for the purpose of adhering to the quality assurance standards. This kind of formal evaluation does not reflect a clear and an accurate depiction of the

real weaknesses and points of strength in the EAP programme at CAS. She stated:

“Evaluation is very important. It could be done within one year or two years but we can’t leave the system without evaluation because within evaluation you can think of the strengths and the weaknesses and you are going to reinforce the strengths and improve the weaknesses so I think it is very important yes. Maybe people involved with quality assurance are currently more interested in this because they are trying to reflect on the performance but practically I feel it is just to write documents, it is not to evaluate and to really improve the weaknesses but we are trying to hide the weaknesses and to show our strengths and this isn’t evaluation”

Unlike the reality concealing approach adopted by the quality assurance committee at the ministry, curriculum evaluation should be aimed at delineating the existing curriculum challenges so that an action plan can be suggested to promote EAP curriculum development at CAS colleges. The previous responses indicated that there is an agreement among EAP teachers about the need to establish a programme evaluation scheme to deal with areas of improvement and to cater for the emerging needs of the students, the academic departments as well as the job market.

5.5.3 The Impact of Contextual Factors on Curriculum Development

The earlier discussion was devoted to the analysis of two major challenges; challenges related to the underlying leadership approach at CAS colleges and the challenges which relate to the area of curriculum planning. This section will be focused on analyzing other contextual factors which are believed to have an influence on curriculum development in EAP courses. These contextual factors will be further investigated in the following discussion.

5.5.3.1 Job insecurity among EAP teachers at CAS

Expat teachers constitute the majority of EAP teachers at the colleges. They are either recruited directly by the Ministry of Higher Education or by various recruitment agencies. There seems to be a feeling of insecurity among expat teachers because they have a contract renewable every two years if they are recruited by the Ministry, whereas teachers' contracts recruited by agencies are renewed every year. Klara's (Female, American, 1 year in CAS) indicated a feeling of job insecurity in the following response:

"I don't know, we don't know if there is anything to expect, the rumor is, if you make suggestions and your suggestions are not liked, then maybe your contract will not be renewed so it is better to just keep our ideas to ourselves even though we have a lot of ideas to improve different things. The rumor is our ideas are not welcome, because we are westerners. I don't know if these are true or not because there is no communication, there is no meeting, there is nothing"

The feeling of insecurity presented in the previous response can have an influence on curriculum development in EAP courses. Expat teachers are coming from a number of places with little or insufficient knowledge on the social and cultural norms of the work place particularly since communication channels are not effectively maintained. This lack of communication increases the feeling of insecurity among expat teachers and consequently prevents them from taking part in developing the curriculum. This is because they are concerned that their ideas which are intended for making positive changes in the curriculum may result in the termination of their contracts.

It was revealed through the analysis of the semi-structured interviews that many expat teachers do not have a sense of job satisfaction with respect to the academic and financial promotions which appear to be restricted to Omani teachers. This was highlighted by Berla (Female, British, 8 years in CAS) who

responded when asked about the extent to which she feels satisfied with her employment contract:

“Yes and No really. I’m alright but it does ache that I don’t get paid for my Masters and there is no incentives really. I think the Omanis get paid for their Masters; I don’t get paid for my Masters. I had my Masters when I started here but I didn’t have five years’ work experience. I don’t know but I do know that most of the expats don’t get paid for their Masters which is unfair really. Some of them do if they have their Masters and five years teaching experience but we don’t. I have asked about it (....) I went to see about it and they said I have to publish two articles after my Masters then it will be highly unlikely that I will get paid anyway because there is no money in the pot. I do think that is unfair. They are trying to create an egalitarian society where people are valued and feel equal and you know it isn’t fair”

The previous excerpt exposes how Berla feels that the administrative regulations with respect to the provision of financial and academic promotions at CAS colleges are not being fairly allocated. There are a number of administrative regulations implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education on this regard. Although there is some truth about the issue presented by Berla regarding the allocation of financial promotions, there are some facts about this issue which need to be clarified. When expat teachers are directly recruited by the Ministry, they are given the financial grade allocated for Master’s degree holders but are not allowed to ask for any further financial promotions even if they receive a higher qualification during their service at CAS colleges with the exception of their annual allowances. Berla could be right about restricting the financial promotions to Omani teachers within the higher education system, however, expat teachers recruited by the ministry are definitely in a better situation compared to agency contracted expat teachers at CAS. In his speculation about this issue Amjad (Male, Syerian, 3 years in CAS) who is a PhD holder at CAS commented:

“I’m an assistant professor but my contract is with Hawthorne is a teacher. In other parts of the world, if you are an assistant professor, you will be assigned a lower teaching load. I’m trapped. I had to leave Syria quickly because of the war and once they offered me the job I came immediately and now I’m trapped now. I’m trying to leave but according to the law I need to get no objection letter from my employer and they don’t give it to me. I got an offer from another college in Muscat but because of this I could not go”

The kind of challenges addressed by Amjad indicate that issues related to the conditions of English teachers in the Gulf are complex particularly because some recruitment agencies are oriented towards profit making and take advantage of English teachers who seek job opportunities in the Gulf. With respect to the allocation of financial promotions to expat teachers which was referred to previously, this issue has become also relevant to Omani teachers especially after the economic crisis which has largely influenced oil producing countries including Oman. This issue will receive further investigation in the forthcoming discussion chapter.

5.5.3.2 Teaching Load

The qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews suggested that EAP teachers have a reasonable teaching load which indicates that this aspect would not to be a barrier to curriculum development at CAS colleges. When asked about her opinion about the teaching load, Dina (Female, British, 8 years in CAS) stated:

“Just now I have 16 hours which is fine. I feel very lucky, you know for other places I taught 25 and 30 hours, so people always complain about their teaching load. I think they always do so. I think it is quite manageable”

Though the majority of the teachers reported their teaching load is reasonable, a number of EAP teachers from College of Rustaq for Applied Sciences indicated that their teaching job is demanding because they are required to teach ELT

courses in addition to the EAP courses. It was previously stated College of Rustaq is the only CAS College which provides an ELT programme in addition to the foundation programme and courses of English for Academic Purposes. The system for allocating teaching hours appears to be different from other colleges. Thus a number of EAP teachers could be required to teach two different courses: one course from the ELT programme and another from the EAP programme. Basma (Female, local, 7 years in CAS) commented on this:

“It depends on each semester. Sometimes it can reach 16 or 15 hours. To some extent I am happy with the teaching load but sometimes we have also other courses not only EAP courses. We have ELT courses like the teacher training programme and this also takes, these are entirely different types of courses so we are preparing for different courses here. We in Rustaq might be given two different courses to teach, like it could be ELT and EAP in the same semester”

(58% item 16) of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed with EAP teachers in CAS colleges having enough time to do research and participate in conferences. The allocation of time should not be a central matter in this area. Teachers are still able to think of other ways to develop the curriculum because knowledge is not only provided through attending conferences and participating in external events. The main issue which seems to be affecting teachers' involvement in developing the curriculum goes beyond the teaching load. It relates to the existence of a powerful institutional culture created by the top-down centralized system at CAS colleges. It is this institutional culture which views teachers as curriculum implementers rather than curriculum developers. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 6 years in CAS) alluded to this significant impact of the institutional culture in the following comment:

“Something else I may add is that having a lower load isn't a guarantee that you are going to do some better. I think it all depends on the type of culture that you have in the institution. If the institution is more of hey lets meet regularly. Let's fix it or let's attempt something different. Yeah if that

culture is in place, even if you have a higher load, I think there is going to be change but if people are just listening and carrying out orders, their expertise isn't made use of. I don't think there is going to be anything new; it isn't going to have that effect"

The previous quote reinforces the significance of teachers' involvement if positive changes are to be made in the curriculum. Listening to the EAP teachers and attending to their feedback about areas of improvement in EAP courses will be far more encouraging to the teachers and effective to the institution as well.

5.5.3.3 Lack of Orientation

Another contextual issue which can also be associated with curriculum development in EAP courses as revealed by the findings is the lack of proper orientation for EAP teachers. Ralph (Male, British, 2 years) commented on this issue in the following excerpt:

"Not really, I feel at CAS what happens is that you get given a course; in the collaborative zone we have now the Google docs. We can go there and find the syllabus documents, useful supporting materials and we are expected to read those. Then like I say ask other teachers. There will be a meeting, probably a general meeting at the beginning. Maybe there won't be. You can't expect to be hand held. I think at CAS you always need to go out there and ask, find out definitely"

There is a lack of proper orientation for new teachers at our colleges. New teachers should not be expected to figure out curriculum related inquiries on their own or by informally asking their co-workers. Providing orientation for new teachers is important to ensure they are fully aware of the course objectives, students, and the context. The Google docs currently being used at the colleges can assist teachers in sharing supplementary materials and course documents. However, they cannot provide a proper induction for new teachers in EAP courses.

Klara (Female, American, 1 year in CAS) elaborated on this issue of lack of orientation in the following comment:

“I never got to see the curriculum for the class that I teach or that I taught last semester, or even a course description, so I’m not sure what the relationship is between the curriculum and the classes that I taught. Well, I saw a list like a schedule, on this day you will do this unit but I never saw a course description or course objectives. We didn’t get a lot of information. Beyond that there was not so much guidance or advice or anything. It is also my first time teaching in the Middle East so I wasn’t sure. I didn’t really know what to expect, and nobody ever told us what to expect either so ya I started out trying activities that worked for me in the past but didn’t work so well here so I just think on my feed a lot and try to negotiate something that will be more helpful for the students”

The issue reported by Klara on the lack of orientation indicates a sizable gap between teachers and level coordinators in her college. Based on my experience, level coordinators are required to have a meeting at the beginning of every semester in which teachers are informed on the objectives, textbooks, assessment procedures and also receive all the required course documents. If the aim is to develop the curriculum, then we should first ensure the channels of communication are effectively established between teachers and level coordinators. It is only when teachers develop an awareness of the curriculum; the context and the objectives of the institution they can be expected to think of areas of improvement in EAP courses.

5.5.3.4 Lack of Incentives

On the lack of incentives, the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews showed that a significant number of the participants indicated their willingness to receive financial incentives as a means to motivate teachers to develop the curriculum. The participants had different perspectives on this issue. Mansour

referred to the significance of appreciating teachers for their work because this can be seen as an incentive in the eyes of EAP teachers. He commented:

“However, we have to live with the fact that Ministry does not have much to offer when it comes to rewarding or extending their appreciation. I have seen teachers work so hard for long hours, stay here until after working hours, come here on the weekends without being recognized but they did it for themselves that is what I think. The environment isn’t likely to change any time soon”

The allusion given by Mansour about the issue of the environment implies that the underlying centralized leadership style has a great impact on all the curriculum elements discussed earlier including the provision of teaching incentives. Zuhair (Male, Egyptian, 10+ years) provided a comment that seems relevant to this particular issue. He reflected:

“Well, everybody would love to be financially rewarded but I think more important than financially to feel that you are making a difference for the students. I feel that is more important than financial reward because financially it won’t be that much. It is just knowing that you are making a difference. I think that is enough or that is enough for me anyways”

As clarified by Zuhair, teachers’ involvement in curriculum through providing them with trust and giving them a voice is far more important to them than the financial incentives.

5.4.3.5 The Need for In-Service Training

One of the challenges delineated through the analysis of both the questionnaire and the interviews is the need for in-service training for EAP teachers at CAS colleges. EAP teachers do not receive pre-service training before they start teaching at CAS. This issue was evident in the analysis of item (19) to which a significant number of the participants about 77.7% indicated that they did not have

CAS provided pre-service training in EAP before they started teaching at the colleges. The kinds of in-service training programmes are quite limited and in most cases, focused on Omani teachers rather than being fairly distributed among all teaching staff members. This fact was supported by the analysis of item (23) in the questionnaire for which 44.5% of the participants either strongly disagreed or disagreed, 30.9% neither agreed nor disagreed, 23.5 either strongly agreed or agreed with professional development opportunities being fairly distributed among Omani and expatriate EAP teachers. In relation to the issue of distributing professional development opportunities, this applies to the participation of teachers in international and local conferences. Expat teachers are not funded for their participation in conferences which can be seen as a demotivating factor which can affect the willingness of expat teachers in contributing to the curriculum. A recurrent theme associated with the lack of in-service training at CAS colleges is the institutional approach of the Ministry with respect to providing professional development for EAP teachers at CAS colleges. Hamed (Male, Omani, 10 years in CAS) stated:

“Yes, I think what happens is that most teachers once they finish their degree of the kind of training that they receive we think that is it, we need nothing (.....) I’m not very sure whether they need to give Omanis more chances just not because they are Omanis, because most Omanis are new and I think they need to be given the chance and they are going to continue in this college because of the polices maybe for a reasonably long period of time. I’m happy that there is no distinction between Omanis and non-Omanis though I feel young Omanis need some kind of training and professional development”

With regards to the opportunities of professional development at CAS colleges, there is no established framework for the provision and regulation of professional development practices. Very few efforts are being internally initiated by Heads of Departments of English Programmes which are being encouraged among both

local and expatriate teachers. More investigation on the issue of EAP teachers' professional development will be provided in the following sections.

Results for Research Question 2:

5.6 EAP Curriculum Development as Perceived by EAP Teachers

This part of the analysis is intended to provide answers to the second research question which relates to how EAP teachers think EAP curriculum development can best be achieved at CAS colleges. This section will be focused on the discussion about curriculum development as perceived by EAP teachers according to the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire but mainly the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews. According to the analysis of the data, the section will be classified in two central categories which are **Revisiting the Current EAP Curriculum** and **Needs Analysis in the EAP Programme at CAS**. These two categories will be further discussed in the following sections.

5.6.1 Revisiting the Current EAP Curriculum

According to the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, it was suggested that curriculum development should be centered on surveying the existing programme which is a realistic approach. The following discussion will highlight the centrality of the teacher's role in the process of EAP curriculum development. The importance of teachers' role in curriculum development has been indicated by a significant number of the participants in their answers to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire. One of the comments is provided in the following excerpt:

“First, we should evaluate the current syllabi to gauge whether they meet the department’s needs or not. Second, teachers should give their feedback about current curriculum and what is missing in them”

As suggested in the previous quote, the participant alluded to the need for a process of evaluation or review to the “current syllabi”. Another reference was made to the curriculum evaluation stage by one of the answers in the open-ended questions of the questionnaire indicating:

“The existing curriculum needs to be reviewed and made a better fit to the students’ actual needs”

This sort of initial evaluation process can be seen as the first step in the needs analysis process which has been suggested by a large number of the participants in their answers to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. This initial EAP programme evaluation can be quite informative for conducting needs analysis. The previously discussed challenges provided under “*EAP Curriculum Challenges at CAS Colleges*” can be further investigated at this particular evaluative stage. Identification of the challenges can help to determine a clear path for the needs analysis stage intended to develop the current EAP curriculum.

The following section will focus on analyzing the main elements of the needs analysis process stressing that teachers’ role is quite important not only in this curriculum reviewing process but they also have a central role in all the elements of the needs analysis stage which will be discussed in the following sections.

5.6.2 Needs Analysis in EAP Programme at CAS

The importance attributed to needs analysis in relation to curriculum development received a considerable attention in the literature (Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001; Nation and Macalister, 2010). In the context of the current research, the analysis

of the findings indicated there are some major steps to be achieved to ensure the comprehensiveness and the effectiveness of the needs analysis.

5.6.2.1 Reviewing Current Programme's Goals and Objectives

This stage is seen as a significant stage in the needs analysis because it is the stage through which “the concept” of needs will be further investigated and negotiated. In the context of the study, revisiting our EAP programme goals and objectives is so important as these should be oriented towards the needs of the students and not the needs of the institution. One of the respondents provided an answer to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire commenting:

“There is another approach to do this; we can tailor-make a local curriculum which is designed exclusively to meet all the departments’ and students’ needs”

In the previous comment, the participant referred to “the needs” of the subject departments and “the needs” of the students. Curriculum development can be effective if it was based on a sound assessment of the learners’ needs rather than the institutional needs. The priority should be given to the students’ needs because EAP courses are designed for them as they are the main stakeholders that needs analysis should be targeting. Bradley (Male, American, 1 year in CAS) pointed out curriculum development should be students’ oriented:

“So, for effective curriculum development, I think first of all you need to have fairly clear goals, and second of all you need to take a look at the goals and the end product; where the students are right now. That is the beginning point. And the curriculum and the teacher together are supposed to move the students to that end goal to close the gap or at least to narrow that gap. So, I think curriculum development is very important. It needs to start very much where the students are right now”

The discussion provided by Bradley on the importance of reviewing the current programme in light of “the current” needs of the students which he referred to as “*where the students are right now*” is quite significant to this research investigation. One of the curriculum challenges previously revealed through the analysis is the gap between the curriculum goals and objectives and the current level of the students. This fact suggests that the provided curriculum should be realistic and should not be more demanding than what the students are linguistically and academically able to cope with.

Dina (Female, British, 8 years in CAS) alluded to the importance of the programme reviewing process. She stated:

“Ok, I think it depends whether you have an established curriculum or whether you have a curriculum that is brand new. For me I think probably the biggest part of any kind of curriculum development is needs analysis and higher level objectives. You need to know your higher level objectives, what is your curriculum? What is it about? What is the purpose of it? Where does it fit in the wider scheme of things?”

As highlighted by Dina, these fundamental questions which require considering the programme’s higher level objectives are quite important to be raised when reviewing our EAP programme. She continues her interpretation as follows:

“I think that a big part of curriculum development is reviewing the process, did it meet the objectives? If it didn’t why not? How do we change it?”

Dina’s reflection shows one of the main challenges responsible for hindering EAP curriculum development is the lack of a programme evaluation scheme. When the EAP curriculum was established with all its basic elements, there was no evaluation process to ensure the educational aims and objectives were being achieved. What the EAP programme currently lacks is a comprehensive and on-going evaluation process which can produce an accurate assessment for all curriculum elements to achieve the kind of curriculum development we aspire for.

5.6.2.2 Aligning the EAP Programme with the Academic Disciplines

The analysis of the findings from both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews indicated that the majority of participants denote to the need for more alignment with subject areas in terms of providing students with more linguistic and academic exposure to their major studies. Ahmed (Male, Omani, 6 years in CAS) related to this alignment approach in his comment:

“Number two, we need to come up with things that are matching our students’ abilities and of course professions like for example we are currently having general English courses and I think we need to go for courses of English for specific purposes. So, this is something we need to bear in mind when we think about development”

Ahmed argued on the need to shift the current approach of the programme from EAP into courses of English for Specific Purposes. However, there is some contradiction in his comment because earlier he mentioned *“we should come up with things that are matching with our students’ abilities.”* The truth which was revealed through the analysis is that the current curriculum is set at a level higher than the students’ abilities therefore changing the approach of the programme into English for Specific Purposes will not be the right decision to make. What we currently need is a well-established EAP programme which is successfully aligned with the students’ academic disciplines. Ahmed seems to be right in his view on how even though the design of EAP courses is based on introducing a set of common core universal skills, this approach has not been effective in preparing the students for their academic majors. At the CAS colleges, students are required to study four EAP courses which suggests a focus of quantity over quality. More attention should be directed to further investigate the aims and objectives of the four courses and to attempt to make some variations to create an alignment in terms of the course materials and assessment to insure the main objectives of the EAP courses are achieved. The current EAP programme should be oriented

towards preparing the students to cope with their academic studies but we do not seem to prepare the students enough. Basma (Female, Omani, 7 years in CAS) provided a thoughtful interpretation on this respect:

“For me the starting point is needs analysis. We should sit with IT and Business teachers and see what our students are studying in these departments, what their needs are, what kind of English support we can provide for them. Also, we should do some questionnaires and surveys for the students and see what they know already, what they need. Students have to be involved and Business and IT experts and teachers. Then we decide on our courses, we see how these are working and if students are getting benefit from it. Then after we finish we get feedback from all teachers and students again and we develop. So, it should be like a cycle repeated over and over again”

Basma’s comment encapsulates how she perceives curriculum development can be achieved at the EAP programme. She referred to a very important element which is the collaboration of EAP teachers and subject teachers. The method suggested by Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) which they referred to as *“the subject-specialist informant method”* can help in developing the existing courses by making them more aligned with the students’ linguistic and academic needs in their academic departments. This method can also be quite effective in the production of more contextualized materials to fill the current gap in the implemented EAP textbooks. A higher level of collaboration should be initiated similar to the idea presented by Mansour (Male, Omani, 4 years in CAS) which extends the limits of academic departments at the colleges.

“I think a very important element also is that we need to have a look at other curriculums implemented somewhere else in other contexts. We can’t just simply start from scratch and try to guess what students will need and what materials we are going to use. We really have to consult people who have been there, who have been through the process”

The intended collaboration can be achieved through benchmarking with other local or international higher education institutions and to make use of their educational practices.

5.6.2.3 EAP Teachers as Curriculum Developers

With respect to the current role of EAP teachers in curriculum, the analysis of the findings signifies a limited implementation of the curriculum. In their response to (item 25) of the questionnaire, 85% of the participants either strongly agreed or agreed that EAP teachers can make a valuable contribution in the context of EAP curriculum development. A similar view was also evident in the analysis of item (17) to which a significant majority of the participants of about 80.3% either strongly agreed or agreed that EAP teachers should be encouraged to work in collaborative teams to solve various curriculum elements. A number of instances in the data supported the view that teachers can contribute in the development of the EAP curriculum. Bradley (Male, American, 1 year) commented:

“I think that you will find that teachers are quite willing to get involved in curriculum review, perhaps designing curriculum as well. At some point the ministry should either be trusting us, or sending representatives, either one is OK but I think that people who are making the decisions aren’t seeing firsthand how those decisions are being played out in the classroom”

Bradley’s view on the importance of teachers’ involvement in reviewing the current curriculum is true. It depicts the reality of the context in which teachers are not involved in designing the EAP curriculum and therefore the curriculum reviewing process does not seem to be happening. Teachers’ views should be considered because they can provide an accurate assessment of the curriculum and the students. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) denoted to the role of teachers as curriculum reviewers in his comment:

“See probably you can judge based on the past experience of teaching the same level, what else can be improved, what do we want extra? And then we move on the how; how can we do that? I’m sure the how is going to generate a lot of results”

In the previous excerpt, Abdul Aziz highlighted how teachers should play the biggest role in the process of reviewing the current curriculum because they are aware of the curriculum issues which hinder curriculum development in EAP courses. In order to make the reviewing process successful, decision makers should attend to the feedback provided by teachers because this will be the first step towards curriculum development. Abdul Aziz explained further:

“I think if teachers have been given the chance to contribute to curriculum development, it will be very successful. We are talking about someone who is in the field, who knows what it is like to teach. I don’t want someone in an office somewhere giving me decisions and directions to do something when he isn’t aware of what it is like in the actual field. I think they are the right people to provide judgment and any sort of change should be taken after consulting with them and after taking their feedback prior to the implementation”

As discussed earlier in this chapter, all the EAP curriculum challenges addressed throughout the analysis were provided by EAP teachers. Throughout their teaching experience in EAP, teachers at CAS have acquired sufficient knowledge on the context and the various curriculum challenges they had to face. Thus, they are the ones who can provide sound judgments with regards to curricular issues. Sheikha (Female, Omani, 6 years in CAS) provided a thoughtful reflection on the role she perceived should be played by teachers to develop the current EAP curriculum. She commented:

“They can play a very important role because they know the reality and they know the students’ level and they have this experience of students’ level first of all, the linguistic level I mean, they are aware of the current

textbooks and what are good things within that and what are the weaknesses of these textbooks. They are also aware of the assessment area and how we can evaluate or assess the students according to what we want them to achieve. I think they can play a very important role in developing the curriculum especially that we have different nationalities here, different people, different types of experiences, coming from different places so each teacher is going to tackle the issue from a different point of view and we might reach a valuable curriculum”

Sheikha alluded to a very significant factor which relates to the role of EAP teachers in curriculum development which is establishing a collaborative teaching community at CAS colleges. It is through maintaining collaborative meetings among EAP teachers oriented for the discussion of curriculum issues as a team, curriculum development can become a reality. Utilizing the experiences of the multi-cultural perspectives of EAP teachers can enrich the process of curriculum development if those teachers were actively involved in the curriculum. Bradley (Male, American, 3 years in CAS) stressed the significance related to the contribution of teachers in curriculum development through establishing collaborative teams of Omani teachers as well as expat teachers. He stated:

“The domestic teachers have the advantage of knowing more of the existing systems that are in place (...) An Omani teacher will know because they have grown up in that system. There are some advantages for that. The expat teacher on the other hand brings the ability to think outside the box a little bit. When you put someone who thinks inside the box together with someone who thinks outside the box, you have the opportunity of some very good synergy to be happening, some very good dialogue”

The point referred to by Bradley with respect to having a dialogue among both Omani and expat teachers can be seen as one of the ways by which EAP teachers can contribute in the development of the curriculum. Regarding the context of the current research, teachers should be more involved in curriculum

and this will require understanding to what extent the teachers' role can contribute in the desired development of EAP courses at CAS colleges.

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews showed that the majority of teachers expressed their willingness to take part in developing the EAP curriculum. Having teachers who are willing to step in and initiate some positive changes in the curriculum indicates that curriculum development can be attainable at our context particularly if teachers are allowed to contribute in the process. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) talked about his experience in developing one of the ELT courses at the College of Rustaq commenting:

"We have been tasked with the responsibility of improving one of the courses here, educational technology. It was very traditionally oriented at first but then with the improvement, it became more project based, more updated, more matching with the work force in the present and yeah there is better feedback. I think yeah I like that. I liked the whole experience myself, I like bringing a positive change to the institution, to the lives of students"

With his experience, the information provided by Abdul Aziz in the previous excerpt relates specifically to EAP courses and this account gives a clear representation of how teachers' role can contribute positively to the development of the curriculum. The participants indicated that they are interested in contributing to various curriculum elements such as reviewing course objectives, developing assessment and course materials. If our colleges make use of the varied experiences of EAP teachers and combine their efforts through formulating collaborative teams; curriculum development can be achieved at CAS colleges.

Results for Research Question 3:

5.5.3 Fostering Professional Development for an Enriched EAP Curriculum

The discussion on professional development cannot be viewed separately from our discussion about curriculum development as they should be viewed as two interrelated concepts. It has been discussed in the previous section how teachers are believed to be central players in the process of curriculum development as revealed by the analysis of the data. The analysis of the quantitative and the qualitative data indicated that developing the professional capacities of EAP teachers can enhance and enrich curriculum development. Therefore, professional development as perceived by EAP teachers will be presented in this chapter as part of the process of curriculum development and not as a separate element.

According to the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire, (82% item 21) either strongly agreed or agreed that providing professional development opportunities for teachers can contribute to EAP curriculum development. In the previous discussion on curriculum challenges, the issue of the limited in-service training provided for EAP teachers at the colleges is viewed as a challenge to curriculum development. In-service training is a form of professional development which can be very effective not only to promote teachers' professional practices but also to aid the teachers with some useful strategies to deal with curriculum challenges. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) reported that the main issue with professional development is that though it exists, it is not formally integrated into the system at CAS colleges. He stated:

“So, it might not be that conscious, it might not be that articulated or written but it is there. So, teachers have awareness for going for the better and doing for the better. But, if it were more formal, and actually they were initiatives to make PD more of a programme, something more integrated in the system”

As stated in the previous comment given by Abdul Aziz, professional development is not formalized into the programme and there are various PD practices across

colleges initiated by HODs of English departments. Most of these PD practices have proven to be unsuccessful because they were general in their approach rather than being focused on dealing with the current curriculum challenges. The lack of a framework for professional development which is focused on targeting a set of professional skills in areas such as materials development and the development of assessment literacy is seen by many as one of the key areas of need.

5.5.3.1 Promoting a Culture of Professional Development

The qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews indicated that in order to have successful professional development initiatives to enhance the current EAP curriculum, a culture of professional development must be promoted first. A significant number of the participants (88.8%, item 29) in the questionnaire either strongly agreed or agreed that English departments at CAS colleges should openly discuss issues of curriculum development with EAP teachers. In his interpretation on the importance of a culture of PD, Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) stated:

“Professional development is a culture, it is an institutional culture that we are all on board, that we have a common interest and whether we succeed, we succeed together and if we fail we fail together. PD is about continuous improvement on the situation, if not improvement at least continuous reflection and feedback. We need to sit and think about it and rethink and reflect. Unless we have that, we are not going to have meaningful feedback towards the end”

The previous comment provided by Abdul Aziz gives a clear indication on the overlap between how he views professional development and curriculum development. He discussed the importance of continuous improvement and reflection which are also seen as integral elements in the process of curriculum development. In his speculation about professional development, Abdul Aziz

stressed that the establishment of open-discussions among EAP teachers and administrators, is an effective form of professional development particularly if they are targeted towards solving curriculum issues.

Another option suggested by Hamed (Male, Omani, more than 10 years in CAS) to promote this culture of professional development among EAP teachers was reflected in the following quote:

“But what I feel we need to establish the atmosphere that we should have teachers who like to read in their professions. I think this is what we lack, reading maybe for different reasons as a culture we are not reading a lot”

The approach suggested by Hamed is quite relevant to the discussion about a culture of professional development. Encouraging teachers to read in areas of their interest can help in promoting a culture of professional development. This approach can also be more structured through having various reading circles each of which can be focused on reading on a certain subject of interest. Hamed elaborated on the importance of the establishment of reading circles:

“So, I think we really need to encourage to create this atmosphere. People should read in their areas maybe to attend conferences. If we encourage within each college that I read in my major so let’s say for half an hour and after the meeting we have every month, I start talking about what I found. This will be good for me and my colleagues as well. What we have here, we want to have big things (...) Sometimes if you do small things like reading circles things like that and then in a short seminar you sit and you talk, I think that will be of more benefit than what we do here for a show”

According to Hamed, we do not always need to start with big things such as having local conferences or symposiums to enhance the sustainability of the PD culture. Starting with simple things such as reading circles or frequent department meetings can be more effective PD initiatives.

5.5.3.2 How can PD promote CD?

This particular section will be devoted to the discussion of the third research questions of this study. This section will expose the findings derived from the data to illustrate the views of the participants about the most effective forms of professional development which they perceive to enhance and promote the process of curriculum development at CAS colleges. The analysis of the data revealed three main aspects of professional development which will be further discussed in the following sections.

Attending International and Local Conferences

The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire indicated that the majority of the participants (83.9%, item 24) either strongly agreed or agreed that attending relevant conferences and workshops can provide a great opportunity for EAP teachers to update their knowledge and exchange their teaching experiences. This finding was also supported by the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews. Ameer (Male, Omani, 4 years) discussed the importance associated with attending conferences in the following quote:

“I don't think we should always blame the officials or the college or whoever is in charge, we should not be solely blaming them, we should also improve ourselves like attending seminars outside the college not only attending but also presenting like for instance writing papers that would be a huge development I think”

Although the importance of attending local and international conferences was believed to be an effective PD initiative among the majority of the participants, there are other forms of professional development which can be far more effective to promote curriculum development in our context. One of the

participants provided an interesting response to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire commenting:

“Teachers need to be given opportunities to attend real, practical teaching courses and not just one day conferences. They can then cascade this knowledge to other colleagues and enrich the professional development of all”

According to the previous excerpt, there is an indication of the type of practical knowledge gained from PD sessions which are targeting groups of teachers from the same school and can be more effective than the knowledge obtained through conferences. The previous passage implies that organizing such joint PD sessions which could be targeting EAP teachers, can be more effective particularly if they allow for fruitful interactions and discussions among the participants who share similar concerns and thoughts on the existing curriculum challenges in the EAP programme.

Enhancing Collaborative Teaching Practices

One of the effective forms of professional development as revealed by the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data is the establishment of collaborative teaching practices where teachers are constantly reviewing and reflecting on their own practices and the practices of their co-workers. In their response to the questionnaire, a large number of the participants (62.9%, item 27) either strongly agreed or agreed on curriculum challenges being solved by establishing collaborative teams of EAP teachers across the CAS colleges. Bradley (Male, American, 3 years in CAS) referred to the need for peer mentoring which can be seen as an example of the collaborative teaching practices. He stated:

“I enjoy the peer mentoring process or mentoring may not be exactly the same word. I’m not sure if we need a lot of mentors but peer person to person training just a time to sit around in round tables to discuss ideas,

what worked for you, what didn't work for you, why do you think that happens. I have done some of that on an informal basis and that has been probably the most effective form of professional development"

The peer mentoring process discussed by Bradley as an effective way of professional development constitutes a valuable platform for Omani and expat teachers through which they can share their educational practices and experiences. Teachers' contribution through the implementation of such collaborative teaching practices can be quite influential in solving current curriculum issues. This kind of collective collaboration of various cultural and educational experiences can generate an accurate understanding of how curriculum development can best be achieved.

One of the significant aspects which can be relevant to the discussion on collaborative teaching practices is the contribution expected to be made by experienced teachers. This particular aspect was indicated in the analysis of item (22) of the questionnaire to which a large number of the participants of about 71% either strongly agreed or agreed that experienced teachers should be placed at the center of EAP curriculum development. The contribution expected by experienced teachers in developing the EAP curriculum was also highlighted in the analysis of the qualitative data. Abdul Aziz (Male, Omani, 5 years in CAS) commented:

"The more experience you have, the more introducing change or innovating a little isn't going to be that much demanding because experience grants not only autonomy but helps you making the right decisions"

Experienced teachers who have established awareness about the students, curriculum and the context can ultimately initiate curriculum development through providing constructive feedback to their co-workers. Sheikha (Female, Omani, 6 years in CAS) provided a discussion in which she clarified the effective role which

can be played by experienced teachers to promote collaborative teaching practices at the colleges. She stated:

“Something related to PD which is something I need to highlight is mentoring and we have new teachers coming in the colleges and we have some experienced teachers at the college on the other side. So, we established this mentoring idea in which a new teacher will join a very experienced teacher for the whole semester. The experienced teacher will attend with the new teacher and they have to discuss many issues and it is throughout a semester. By the end of the semester, each one should write a reflective report of the experience and the new teacher should write what they have discussed and the learning aspects. The other teacher also is going to write a report of the issues they have discussed”

Allowing for the emergence of peer-mentoring as suggested by Sheikha in the previous excerpt, is seen as a valuable form of professional development which can be positively reflected into developing the curriculum. It not only insures new teachers are being supported by senior co-workers but also empowers experienced teachers by providing them with a participatory role in the process of curriculum development. Peer-mentoring could be seen as an example of effective collaborative teaching practices which can enhance the development of the curriculum. This is because these face-to face interactions between teachers provide a platform of discussion and negotiation of curricular issues which can ultimately lead to the emergence of successful initiatives towards developing the EAP curriculum.

Providing specialized in-service training for EAP Teachers

The qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed that there is a firm belief among the participants on the effectiveness of in-service training as one form of professional development. It was stated in the previous discussion that there is limited in-service training provided for EAP teachers at CAS and recently

the Ministry of Higher Education has officially announced that they will reduce the expenditure on many projects including areas of professional development. This will likely result in fewer PD opportunities for EAP teachers and further the gap between the needs as perceived by the teachers. Hamed (Male, Omani, more than 10 years in CAS) alluded to this issue in the following comment:

“I feel in-service training is very important for professional development so I feel that is important but not necessarily that it has to be done officially as I feel because of funds, because of things they can’t always send teachers on a course if it is a time the academic year wouldn’t allow and it will be difficult for the ministry to send all teachers to do it during the summer for official training”

The previous comment provided by Hamed indicated the importance of in-service training in relation to the development of the curriculum. Though, it is important for CAS colleges to consider the establishment of a professional development plan, we should continue to focus on forms of professional development which can be initiated by EAP teachers themselves. There are a reasonable number of experienced teachers at CAS colleges who can organize workshops to deal with the existing curriculum issues such as exam writing, materials development and using up to date teaching methodologies. Abdul Aziz talked about his experience organizing a well-structured programme for professional development in College of Rustaq which he viewed as quite effective. He commented:

“I organized a PD programme here in CAS in Rustaq. Well, actually a priority for me was that we have a lot of expertise around the but unfortunately very undervalued so the first thing I remember I did after proposing the plan to the HODs and getting the green light was that I approached them. I said hey, we have this particular programme and plan. Pick a theme that you think is relevant and it is going to help the rest of the team and we are going to schedule that either on a weekly basis or by weekly and we can have two simultaneous sessions”

The programme initiated by Abdul Aziz in College of Rustaq can be expanded to other colleges to maximize the effectiveness of such focused interactive workshops. Evidence about the importance of providing specialized in-service training for EAP teachers was indicated by Sharifa (Female, Omani, 3 years at CAS and a level coordinator). She stated that:

“I think some EAP teachers really need to be taught how to deliver inside reading and lecture ready sessions based on themes because they don’t consider that. For example, they can create a new methodology on how to teach the reading, rather than reading the text silently and then doing it...they only read the questions and then find the answers. They don’t have to take their time to read the text. So, we need to do different PD sessions on how to approach the EAP courses and how to cover them.”

The previous excerpt refers to the significance of providing specialized EAP in-service training for EAP teachers who might need to be oriented on how to approach certain aspects of the EAP courses using appropriate methodologies. Similar collaborative workshops can be particularly focused on solving the current issues since they provide an open platform to exchange ideas and experiences on various curriculum related aspects. Organizing such specialized structured workshops through which EAP teachers can be empowered to solve curriculum issues will not only lead to EAP curriculum development but will also enhance teachers’ professional growth at the same time.

Summary

This chapter presented a detailed account of the analysis of two sets of data (close-ended and open ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews). The analytic approach of this chapter exposed the findings which were derived from the analysis into a set of themes developed to answer the main research questions. The analysis of the findings suggested three major themes each of which included a number of categories and sub-categories. The chapter presented a detailed analysis of teachers’ perceptions about curriculum challenges they

encounter in EAP courses at Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. Based on the analysis of the research data, it was suggested that EAP curriculum development can be achieved through reviewing the current programme, conducting a process of needs analysis as well as the provision of more structured forms of professional development.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with discussing the main findings which emerged in the previous chapter of data analysis. The chapter discusses the findings in association with some of the current and influential issues which are either implied through the representation of the findings or derived from the pertinent curriculum literature. This chapter also provides a reflective and a critical discussion on the real challenges which influence curriculum development in EAP courses within the higher education context in Oman. The chapter is aimed at presenting a model for curriculum development proposed from the literature by Nation and Macalister (2010). The theoretical orientation on which this model is based is relevant to the approach of curriculum development articulated through the perceptions of the participants in the analysis of the data.

6.2 The Global Context of EAP in Higher Education

This section is expected to provide answers for the first research question which investigates the nature of EAP curriculum challenges at CAS colleges. As it has been revealed in the results chapter, EAP courses at CAS colleges are operating under a top-down centralized leadership approach. This finding conforms with Reid's (1992) view which suggests that in order to understand curriculum, we need to realize to what extent curriculum is being influenced by the existence of educational institutions. The institutional power which has been prevailing in the context of the study has given rise to many challenges which influenced the effectiveness of EAP courses. The most important manifestation of the dominant institutional impact is the role of teachers in these courses being confined to the enactment of the curriculum. Teachers have no say in the design or the development of syllabus, textbooks selection, assessment and evaluation of EAP courses. This finding echoes EL-Okda (2005, p. 33) who indicated that curriculum

development in almost all Arab countries is based on a top-down model in which teachers' contribution is restricted to the 'implementation of pre-designed packages of teaching materials.'

To further elaborate on the complexities which emerged due to the current top-down approach which has negatively influenced the design and the planning of EAP courses, there is a significant issue which needs to be uncovered at this point which relates to the impact of the external education providers on the EAP curriculum in Oman. The provision of both foundation programmes and credit-bearing EAP programmes has undergone rapid changes since the transformation of the colleges from Colleges of Education into Colleges of Applied Sciences in 2005. According to Ismail (2011) the English language component of both foundation and EAP courses was outsourced to Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) in New Zealand. Victoria University of Wellington was selected as the English language provider since it has a long and creditable history of English language programmes as well as good reputation as one of the top leading English universities in New Zealand. On the basis of the educational agreement between the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman and Victoria University of Wellington, the curriculum for both foundation and EAP courses was provided. The collaboration between the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman and external educational curriculum providers gives a clear indication of the impact of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in the higher educational institutions of the countries referred to by Kachru's (1985) as the Expanding Circle. As indicated by Charles and Pecorari (2016), higher education has become one of the drivers for the provision of EAP programmes. One of the socio-political effects of the over reliance on external professional expertise from countries in the Inner Circle has been the limitation of EAP teachers' roles to the implementation of curriculum.

The foundation and EAP programmes at CAS colleges went through another process of change which was after the introduction of Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programmes in Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) in the Sultanate of Oman. The creation of Oman General Academic Standards was

aimed at regulating the foundation programmes in all the national universities and colleges in the public and the private sector. Since then, not only foundation programmes at CAS adhered to these national standards but also courses of English for Academic Purposes. The adherence of the current EAP programme to the national standards signifies that EAP courses have not only been subjected to external effects created by the spread of English as a lingua franca but also to the institutional power of higher education providers in the Omani context. In their study aimed at investigating the impact of General Foundation Programme Standards (GFPSs) on the credit-bearing EAP programmes at the Language Center at Sultan Qaboos University, Al Maamari and Al Sabti (2013) provided evidence of 'the myriad of interrelations and impacts which these standards created in curricula and policy aspects' of EAP programmes (2013, p. 16). Al Maamari and Al Sabti (2013, p.5) contends that 'By identifying learning outcomes but still leaving the space open for institutional planning and implementation, GFPSs can be seen to position quality and language planning in the hands of the institutions.' The view presented by Al Maamari and Al Sabti (2013) seems to be relevant to the context of the study which has also been influenced by the introduction of Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programmes. Having established a full awareness of the context and the arising curriculum issues in EAP courses, policy makers of the EAP programme opted for aligning the EAP courses with the GFPSs with respect to the learning outcomes stipulated in these standards.

This alignment should be problematized rather than being encouraged by policy makers in our context. While the one-size-fits-all approach adopted by the administrators of the EAP programme at the CAS colleges provides a clear documented description for the expected learning outcomes, it overlooks the specific academic illiteracies which should be targeted in EAP courses. Rather than conducting a process of 'needs assessment' to determine the actual needs that should be targeted by the EAP programme, policy makers tended to focus on the 'perceived needs' which could be associated with the General Foundation Programmes Standards (GFPSs). This impact of the General Foundation

Programmes Standards can be attributed to the inherent flexibility of these standards which 'ascribes autonomous responsibility to individual institutional intervention for the management (i.e. planning and implementation) of these standards into the curriculum' (Al Maamari & Al Sabti, 2013, p. 5).

Another issue associated with the alignment of the EAP programme with the General Foundation Programmes Standards (GFPSs) is that the improvement and development of curriculum in EAP courses seem to be difficult to achieve under the linguistic and academic restrictions imposed by the current alignment. As Carrol, Razvi & Goodliffe (2009, p. 4) pointed out, the General Foundation Programmes Standards (GFPSs) were aimed at setting 'international benchmarking with standards developed by agencies such as the Commission of English Language Programme Accreditation (CEA), USA (2006) and incorporating their own knowledge and experience.' This international benchmarking referred to by Carrol, Razvi & Goodliffe (2009) represents the over reliance of ELT policy makers on external professional experience from Inner Circle countries. In order to establish a successful international benchmarking as intended by ELT policy makers in the higher education context in Oman, more input and feedback from EAP practitioners should also be incorporated to ensure GFPSs are formulated on valid real life educational experiences.

The EAP programme should not be completely aligned to these standards because the EAP programme entails more than the provision of generic learning outcomes but it should also account for the disciplinary demands of academic subject departments. There is currently a great deal of overlap between the learning objectives which are set for foundation programmes and those targeted by EAP courses at CAS colleges. One of the merits of the General Foundation Programmes Standards as reflected in the current EAP programme at CAS is that they present a statement of documented policies and practices which can facilitate formative evaluation of the EAP programme. However, according to Al Hussein (2004) who conducted a study focusing on the examination of foundation programmes in technical colleges in Oman, the students' needs within EAP should

be achieved by input from both English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). Within this frame, GFPSs standards can be seen as a successful overall strategy for EAP programmes in higher education institutions in Oman. Therefore, the need to establish a curriculum review process comprising of foundation and EAP teachers, programme administrators as well as representatives from academic departments from various colleges is essential. The aim of the curriculum review process should be focused on providing a constructive feedback on curriculum policy documentations which can be seen as the initial step towards curriculum development in the context of CAS colleges.

6.3 EAP Planning Related Issues at CAS Colleges

This section is intended to provide answers on the first research question with respect to planning related issues in the EAP programme at CAS. The findings revealed that the current approach of the EAP programme places more focus on what Hyland and Ham-lyons (2002) refer to as 'the common core universal skills or language forms' (p. 5). There was a consensus among the majority of the EAP teachers who believe that current EAP programme should integrate ESP materials into the curriculum. Brining about any change to the EAP programme must be justified on the basis of the guiding principles of the course and the needs of the learners. This is because any curriculum related decisions made will eventually impact all the other curriculum elements. There is a glaring lack of clarity with regards to whether EGAP or ESAP should be the guiding approach for the EAP programme at CAS colleges. This is because the current EAP programme offers three EAP courses and one ESP course and there does not seem to be any clear distinction between EAP courses and the ESP course in terms of content and assessment. To explain this further, it appears that the current approach of the EAP programme at CAS colleges is oriented towards the EGAP side of the EAP continuum disregarding the other side which should cater for the specific course variations which should also be reflected in our approach to EAP. Having a course

titled (English for Specific Purposes) within the existing EAP curriculum gives an indication of the inescapable importance of having a level of specificity in our EAP programme which needs to be further developed at the level of implementation particularly that the current ESP course is not implemented in a way which will fill the existing gap in the curriculum. The current ESP course can be seen as a continuation or a replication for the EAP courses. The current approach of our EAP programme should be focused on providing the students with sufficient linguistic and academic preparation to enable them to cope with their academic disciplines.

Another justification for the current EGAP rather than ESAP approach is that providing EGAP programme at CAS allows for the enrolment of students from various academic disciplines. Shifting the approach of our EGAP to ESAP may not be an option at this point because according to Charles and Pecorari (2016) it may require teachers to demonstrate a degree of subject specific knowledge which they may not have. What may solve this problem is a more developed EGAP programme which caters to the students' actual needs. Troudi (2007, p. 14) alluded to the need for a process of comprehensive curriculum development in most Arab countries which will require the existence of 'a solid English language curriculum designed with clear and realistic objectives and reflecting a sound knowledge of methodology, language pedagogy and appropriate materials.'

As indicated in the results chapter, the current EAP courses should be more aligned with the academic orientations of the students' subject specializations. The existing alignment seems to superficial as it is articulated in the EAP course documentations whereas in reality there is no actual alignment between the EAP programme and the academic programmes in various CAS colleges in terms of the assessment practices and the course materials. To establish a proper alignment between the EAP programme and the academic subject departments, a process of needs analysis should be conducted first. The majority of the participants indicated that the needs analysis should be the first stage to the kind of EAP curriculum development intended at the colleges. Needs analysis is the

starting point for any initiative aimed at curriculum development and renewal (Hyland, 2006, Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001).

The needs analysis process is possible to achieve in our context. Yurekli (2012) conducted a needs analysis process in a private university in Turkey to identify the needs of a specific group of students in Computer Science Faculty. Yurekli utilized the perspectives of EAP teachers, subject teachers and students through conducting a SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) Meeting with teachers and distributing a questionnaire to the students. Based on the results collected from the study, the actual needs of students and teachers were identified and the course objectives were revised and accordingly an approach was determined to develop the curriculum. Conducting a similar needs analysis process in the context of the current research will not only provide a valuable insight about the actual needs of the students but will also ensure that our EAP programme is successfully aligned with the various academic departments at CAS colleges. This process of needs analysis can enable administrators as well as EAP teachers to reflect on EAP course objectives and learning outcomes and accordingly conceptualize some strategies to deal with the existing curriculum challenges.

In relation to the discussion about needs assessment as a foundation for the planning and the development of EAP courses, Ananyeva (2013) highlighted the importance of learner-centered based curriculum as a way to facilitate the process of needs analysis. Ananyeva (2013, p. 17) stated 'ESL scholars have long argued for content-based instruction, especially in ESP and EAP programmes, because it has been shown to lead to increased academic achievement and professional accomplishment among ESL students in post- ESL educational programmes and workplaces.' Accordingly, adopting a content-based instruction as an approach can be effective to ensure the EAP programme is in line with the disciplinary demands of academic departments. I believe that integrating content-based instruction into our curriculum will provide the required preparation for students about the discourse of their specific disciplines because Ananyeva (2013, p. 17)

contends 'content-based curriculum is by design tailored to ESL students' needs.' The merits of adopting a content-based curriculum are not limited to the fulfillment of students' needs but also empower teachers to seek an active role in the process of curriculum development and to seek knowledge beyond their disciplines through setting cross-disciplinary collaboration with main stream subject teachers in various academic departments.

One of the main issues in relation to emphasizing the process of needs analysis in designing and developing EAP courses is that the nature of needs analysis should be more convenient to the context. In a study conducted by Al Khalidi (2016) aimed at investigating the perspectives of teachers and students about the process of course design in a private college in Oman, it was revealed that teachers are highly involved in designing EAP courses. The study also indicated that the process of needs analysis is formulated on the basis of how teachers conceptualize the needs of the learners in their context. Initiating needs analysis should be approached with more caution ensuring that learners are highly involved in this process. The needs analysis approach of analyzing the students' needs from the perspectives of teachers is 'based on their beliefs and critical reflections at the course level' (Al Khalidi, 2016, p. 167). In the context of the current study, needs analysis should be seen as a curricular initiative which is intended to improve the currently established EAP programme rather than being envisaged as a transformative stage. A very important aspect of needs analysis in EAP is that the EAP context is based on groups who are made up of students from a diverse set of academic disciplines: Biotechnology, Engineering, Design, Mass Communication, Information Technology and International Business Administration. This means that needs analysis should be aimed at creating a sort of alignment with the main stream subject areas taking into consideration that the EAP courses are carefully tailored with the students' disciplinary backgrounds.

The issue which may hinder the alignment between the EAP curriculum and the core subject areas is the prevailing approach in the EAP programme which is the one-size-fits-all approach because students are mostly grouped together in one

class regardless of their distinctive disciplinary backgrounds. More efforts should be directed by the English Programme Administration in the Ministry of Higher Education to make necessary arrangements with Admission and Registration Centers in the six CAS colleges so that students will be placed in EAP courses according to their academic disciplines. Grouping students from the same specialization in the same class will facilitate the intended EAP curriculum development process.

6.4 The Issue with Commercially Produced EAP Textbooks

The discussion presented in this section is expected to provide answers to the first research question and it focuses on curriculum challenges associated with the use of commercially produced textbooks. The findings of the current study highlighted a sense of dissatisfaction among EAP teachers with respect to the currently commercial series of textbooks produced by Oxford because of their orientation on generic academic skills which fails 'to provide students with a true picture of academic discourses' (Harwood, 2005, p. 151). The lack of the textbook's relevance to the learners' subject specific needs is highly related to the previous discussion of the guiding approach for the EAP programme at CAS colleges. The problem with the textbook's selection in the context of the study is that policy makers who are in charge of selecting the course materials seem to place a tremendous emphasis on the textbooks. Textbooks are not only being viewed as materials to facilitate students' learning but they may also impact the course objectives. A review of the course objectives of EAP courses shows an evidentiary match between the skills emphasized in the textbooks and those stipulated in the EAP course objectives. This indicates that designing course objectives in our EAP courses, which is a curriculum planning process, is currently driven by the textbooks rather than programme oriented educational objectives. Using commercially produced textbooks has created a number of challenges in the context of English language teaching in general and in the context of teaching English for Academic Purposes in particular. Charles & Pecorari (2016, p. 78)

pointed out 'The role and value of commercially produced materials, primarily textbooks, has been much debated in English language teaching.' In relation to the context of the study, textbooks are being selected by programme administrators and the course syllabi are designed according to the content of the selected textbooks. The currently implemented textbooks have been used for a number of years and have not been changed or evaluated since. The absence of a programme evaluation scheme at CAS colleges is related to the issue of the implemented textbooks. Under the lack of an evaluation process to assess the effectiveness of the existing course materials, the issue of lack of relevance to subject-specific disciplines continues to present a challenge for both teachers and students in the context of CAS colleges.

EAP courses operate under a centralized system and the selection of commercially produced textbooks could have been a safe and cost-effective strategy to cater for the linguistic and academic needs of learners from various disciplines. Richards (2001) stated that in contexts where standardized instruction is provided, using commercially produced textbooks is seen as a convenient administrative approach to keep track of the teaching and learning process and compare performance across various classes in the educational institution. However, the current dissatisfaction with respect to the implemented EAP textbooks indicates textbooks 'are unlikely to meet the specific needs of individual EAP groups adequately' (Charles & Pecorari, 2016, p. 79).

The discussion on the value and role of textbooks in relation to EAP courses implies that the selection of proper EAP textbooks that could suit the circumstances and requirements of a particular context is a challenging process. Referring back to the context of the current research, textbooks should not be seen as a source of 'officially sanctioned knowledge' (Harwood, 2005, p. 151). It was revealed in the findings how EAP teachers at CAS colleges use a variety of adapted materials and sometimes design their own materials to fill in existing gaps in the textbooks. This finding clearly shows that EAP teachers have resorted to their own creativity and pedagogical assessment to develop various

supplementary materials for the sake of providing more practice on various learning aspects which the current textbooks have not fully addressed.

Charles and Pecorari (2016) discussed the issue of textbooks selection being associated with the needs analysis process referred to earlier. The findings indicated that the results of the needs analysis process which should be targeted to improve the EAP programme can contribute in informing the evaluation of the target materials. In the context of the current study where external constraints impact the selection of materials, EAP teachers should be encouraged to fill in the existing gaps with the currently implemented textbooks. The evaluation of course materials should be one of the aspects which should be targeted in the process of needs analysis. A large number of EAP teachers have indicated their willingness to contribute in developing the curriculum. Those teachers should be involved to set collaborative partnerships with subject teachers to address any insufficiencies in the current EAP materials. The contribution of subject-area teachers can be effective at this stage because according to Charles and Pecorari (2016) they are aware of the tasks learners are expected to perform in English and they also have experience to suggest problematic aspects that students typically encounter in their disciplines. At the context of CAS colleges, we are using a set of commercially produced textbooks all of which come as a package and they seem to focus on similar themes and general academic purposes. It would be inaccurate to suggest that current textbooks have failed to fulfill the main objective which is preparing students for their academic majors. However, EAP currently implemented textbooks do not emphasize integral levels of specificity in terms of vocabulary, collocations, text types, and writing genres in order to establish a balanced alignment with the learners' academic disciplines.

According to Al Mahrooqi & Al-Busaidi (2010) using course materials which are provided as complete packages in the form of reading materials and on-line materials seems to discourage teachers in Oman from looking for alternative authentic materials which better suit the learners' needs and interests. Afshar & Movassagh (2016) conducted a triangulated study investigating whether the

perceptions of needs varied from the viewpoints of EAP teachers, EAP students and syllabus designers in Iran. The study revealed that 58 percent of the EAP textbooks published by SMAT (the main official center for compiling university textbooks in Humanities), are not complied out of systematic process of needs analysis but were rather based on the authors' conjectures. The-one-size-fits-all approach referred to in the study conducted by Afshar & Movassagh in relation to the design of EAP materials in Iran is not different from the approach of selecting materials in the context of the current study. Ali & Salih (2013, p. 18) conducted a study which focused on investigating EFL teachers' beliefs and views about the practices of needs analysis specifically in the context of ESP/EAP in the Sultanate of Oman. Their study showed that the vast majority of EFL teachers who participated in the study highlighted the importance of needs analysis in the area of 'materials production in the Arab world in general and Oman in particular.'

The issue of selecting appropriate EAP course materials seems to present a challenge to those in charge of planning and designing EAP courses in most educational institutions which provide EAP instruction. Therefore, programme directors and policy makers at CAS colleges should consider the issue of insufficiencies related to the current EAP materials and allow for the implementation of more structured curricular projects with respect to the design and creation of effective EAP supplementary materials. One approach which can be used to fill the existing gap in the implemented EAP materials is to consider writing our own in-house materials by focusing on discipline-specific skills rather than the mere focus on generic academic skills which have been over emphasized in EAP courses at our colleges. EAP materials formulate the only access through which students get access to academic discourse so it is very important to obtain the students' feedback about the produced EAP materials to ensure their effectiveness for the students and their suitability for teaching purposes. The stage of deciding on the suitability of the EAP materials is referred to by Charles and Pecorari (2016) as 'learner and teacher authenticity' highlighting that both learners and teachers can work together 'to authenticate materials through their cognitive and affective engagement' (p. 77). The approach of encouraging the production of

in-house materials will require the provision of relevant professional development for EAP teachers in the area of designing and writing EAP materials.

There is also a need to encourage EAP teachers to make use of computer-assisted language learning materials (CALL). Technology is integrated to some extent in our EAP courses during listening classes in which students either watch or listen to a lecture, but this is not sufficient. To make the technological integration more efficient in EAP classes, Charles and Pecorari (2016, p. 86) emphasized on the importance of CALL materials and having a multi-media capacity which is ‘the ability to integrate text, video, images, animation and sound to allow users to interact with the material.’ This interactive use of technology in EAP classes can enrich the students’ learning experiences and accommodate their different learning styles.

6.5 The Need for Effective Assessment Tools in EAP Courses

The findings of the current research revealed that there are a number of issues related to the current assessment practices implemented in EAP courses at CAS colleges in terms of the formative and the summative assessment. This section will concentrate on discussing issues relating to assessment in an attempt to provide answers to the first research question. The major challenge with current assessment procedures in EAP courses is that continuous assessment is more emphasized than the summative assessment. Though the current form of continuous assessment has the merit of providing the students an opportunity to integrate their speaking and writing skills, there are some shortcomings in this form of assessment which need to be addressed. The results of the findings indicated that we are asking too much of the students by requiring they choose a topic related to their major and then produce two assessed outputs in the form of a class presentation and a final written report. It does not appear realistic to introduce the students to general academic skills and general academic texts and then we expect them to master speaking and writing about discipline-specific

topics which are characterized by the use of highly technical terminology and specialized academic discourse. This may be the reason why many teachers report a large number of students plagiarizing their final written projects.

The discussion on issues with the current assessment practices at CAS colleges can be associated to the constructive alignment theory introduced by Bigg (1996). This theory has been one of the most influential ideas in the higher education literature. It is based on the concept of the learning tasks and assessment procedures being aligned with the learning outcomes intended in the curriculum of a course of study (Biggs, 2003). Despite this sort of alignment might be existing between the course objectives and the final examination, it seems to be missing in the continuous assessment. There is an evident incongruity between the focus of the learning outcomes and the focus of the continuous assessment in the EAP curriculum. To further clarify this issue, it is essential to show how academic writing is given specific attention in our EAP courses. Sufficient time is allocated for providing the students more guidance on how to perform successfully in their projects. However, other academic writing genres such as (comparison-contrast essays, opinion essays, cause-and-effect essays...etc) which are included and emphasized in the textbooks receive less attention by EAP teachers and students.

The issue with the currently implemented continuous assessment is even more complex than it may appear. Al-Adawi & Al-Balushi (2016) conducted a study to investigate to what extent the English Placement test which is used at Colleges of Applied Science (CAS) is achieving its goal. The findings of the study which were retrieved from analyzing the perceptions of both students and teachers of the test indicated a number of issues which require attention. After comparing the scores of the placement test against the scores of the Mid Term in the foundation year as well as seeking expert analysis of the exam content and format, it was revealed that the face and content validity of the placement test range between low to moderate level. This study provides evidence on the need to improve current assessment practices at CAS colleges which has been indicated in the findings as a problematic area of the EAP curriculum. Al Hajri (2014) conducted a study

investigating the effectiveness of English language assessment in the foundation programme (FP) and its predictive validity for academic achievement in the foundation year at the Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. Based on the thematic analysis of studying 118 documents on language assessment, Al Hajri (2014, p. 19) pointed out to the existence of a number of assessment related challenges which are 'incompatibility between what was taught and what was assessed, inconsistency in implementing assessment criteria, and replication of the General Foundation Programmes Standards.' The previous studies provide clear evidence on some existing challenges pertaining to the assessment practices implemented at CAS Colleges in Oman which was also supported by the findings of the current research. There is a need to determine a strategic action plan to deal with these issues at the level of the foundation programme and the EAP programme since these two programmes are designed to coexist in our higher education system. The challenges pertaining to assessment practices in the foundation programme reported in the previous studies indicate that the current gap in the EAP programme between the curriculum and the students' proficiency level could be attributed to the lack of effective assessment practices in the foundation programme. The lack of effective assessment tools in the foundation programme represents the significance of considering all the contextual factors which can affect the quality of curriculum and in this case may require a careful evaluation of curriculum issues in the foundation programme at CAS colleges. A team should be established comprising of subject-teachers, EAP teachers and foundation teachers to review the current assessment practices. Moreover, consideration of a formalized professional development plan at CAS targeting areas in which EAP teachers need further support would be beneficial. The focus can be on areas of assessment to develop assessment competencies to provide sound judgments on the validity and effectiveness of implemented assessment practices.

The other problematic area of assessment is related to the final examination in EAP courses. According to what was revealed in the findings, final examinations need to be further developed because they are being designed by assessment

coordinators who are not specialized in designing and testing materials and are not provided with training in the area of designing assessment tools. In fact, the format of the final exam is ready and assessment coordinators are required to stick to the format when they design various sections of the final exam. The final exam is designed according to the HETEE format that has a common theme which 'can better assess the students' abilities, rather than their knowledge of different subjects.' Having a common theme in the listening, reading, and writing sections of the exam can provide the students with some information on the content area they will be required to write about in the writing section (HETTEE Exams, the Ministry of Higher Education). The language knowledge section is aimed at testing the students on their knowledge of the academic word list (AWL). The format of the final exam which is called (HETEE Exam) (Higher Education Test of Educational English) has been locally devised by a group of assessment coordinators based on the TEEP exam (Test of English for Educational Purposes) which is now accepted by most universities in the UK and many higher education institutions elsewhere. In the context of CAS colleges, the HETEE format is adopted by the Ministry of Higher Education for all levels of English Exams including non-credit Foundation Year exams as well as courses of English for Academic Purposes. The main issue which characterizes the EAP final exam is that only assessment coordinators are assigned the job of writing the exams. After final exams are written, they can only be shared, discussed, reviewed and piloted among assessment coordinators and level coordinators. EAP teachers are excluded from this process and only see the exam on the same day of administering the final exam. It has been indicated through the findings, there is no communication between assessment coordinators and EAP teachers with respect the final exam. Assigning certain people with the task of writing final exams may give the impression to EAP teachers that writing exams is the sole responsibility of assessment coordinators. To solve the issue on the lack of teachers' involvement in assessment, level coordinators and assessment coordinators should involve teachers by asking motivated teachers who demonstrate interest to take part in the process of writing exams. One way to involve teachers in the exam writing process

is to provide them with the HETEE format and ask them to write some practice tests for their EAP classes. It seems logical that not all teachers can have access to the final exam to avoid facing issues of exam confidentiality. However, assessment coordinators should encourage EAP teachers, particularly those who have acquired a long experience of teaching EAP at CAS and would be willing to be involved, to effectively utilize their expertise in the exam writing process.

The previous section highlighted some of the main issues which may be responsible for affecting the quality and the effectiveness of the current assessment practices in EAP courses at CAS colleges. The lack of effective assessment practices at CAS colleges was further supported by a local study conducted by Ali & Al Ajmi (2013). The findings of their study showed that more effort needs to be focused on improving assessment practices and to enhance the quality of learning at CAS colleges. Ali & Al Ajmi (2013, p. 134) emphasized 'investigating teachers' views and beliefs about quality assessment could help by providing insights into quality assessment practices.' Quality assessment in the context of the EAP programme can be achieved by improving assessment procedures and validating existing rubrics. However, we should first focus on promoting the assessment literacy of assessment coordinators who are the ones tasked with designing and writing testing materials. Assessment coordinators though have qualifications in Applied Linguistics, TESOL or a related field of study; they may not be specialized in the area of assessment. Al Adawi & Al Balushi (2016, p. 114) contends that it is important to focus on 'training Omani teachers on exam writing, exam grading and writing test specification as it is a good investment for future.' Therefore, providing assessment-related in-service training for assessment coordinators and teachers who are willing to develop their capabilities and skills in this area, can equip them with the required assessment competencies and to obtain assessment literacy in EAP courses.

6.6 Professional Development of EAP teachers at CAS

This section is intended to deal with ‘curriculum development’ and ‘professional development’ as inseparable educational processes. Therefore, the discussion provided in this section is expected to provide answers to the second and third research question since these questions deal with two inextricable phenomena. This section will focus on Teacher Evaluation at CAS Colleges, The Need for Structured In-Service Training Programmes, Utilizing the Potential of the Virtual Environment to Enhance Professional Development, and Professional Treatment of Teachers at CAS Colleges.

According to the analysis of the findings, it was revealed that though some forms of professional development do exist at CAS colleges, professional development needs to be formally integrated into the CAS administrative system. Professional development is currently seen as one of the responsibilities of Heads of English Departments (HODs) at various CAS colleges. Instead of having different forms of professional development in the annual agenda of HODs, the English programme administrators should consider the significance of establishing a clear framework for teachers’ professional development. There are some professional development opportunities provided by the Human Resources Directorate in the Ministry of Higher Education such as distributing PhD scholarships for eligible candidates from the English departments at CAS colleges or organizing training sessions for teachers. Although, such PD opportunities can contribute in enhancing the professional capacities of teachers, the provision of curriculum-based professional development targeting the area of assessment and materials development would assist in the process. In a study aimed at promoting the professional development of teachers in Omani higher education in general and Colleges of Applied Sciences (CAS) in particular, Al Gatrifi (2016) concluded that the lack of a clear framework for continuous professional development was seen as a serious obstacle by both expat and local teachers.

EAP programme administrators need to adopt a comprehensive approach which can be equally targeted to the development of the EAP curriculum and teachers’

professional development. The findings of the current research indicated attending conferences and workshops has been viewed as an important form of professional development. However, there are more effective ways of professional development which can contribute to enrich the professional capacities of EAP teachers and at the same time contribute to the EAP curriculum. Effective ways of professional development can be focused on the provision of in-service training programmes for teachers in the areas which have been indicated in the findings as problematic such as the area of designing assessment tools and materials writing.

There has been critique on the current approaches of professional development at CAS colleges according to what was stated in the (Oman Academic Accreditation Authority, 2016). The final assessment of current practices of professional development highlighted 'there appears to be no thought out strategy relating to the on-going professional development of staff. For academic staff, attendance at conferences and specific IT training seems to be the major form of professional development.' From my own experience, as a previous EAP teacher and level coordinator in CAS Sohar, the professional development activities provided at the colleges were primarily focused on improving EAP teachers' IT skills such as using the SIS (Student Information System) and the Blackboard.

With respect to attending conferences internationally and locally, only Omani teachers were eligible for funding according to the regulations and bylaws set by the Human Resources Directorate in the Ministry of Higher Education. The training we received on the use of blackboard was quite useful particularly for teachers who have problems with technology in the classroom. There are some issues which need to be considered with respect to attending and participating in local and international conferences such as the time and the financial constraints. EAP teachers who are interested in conferences are required to look for a substitute teacher for their classes during the period of their conference participation. The administration of CAS colleges has been strict in the recent years with regards to conference participations because as per the new regulations, teachers are not allowed to attend or participate in conferences during the teaching period.

Moreover, new regulations have been circulated across the colleges which states that even if teachers' conference participations have been approved by the Ministry and the college administration, expat as well as Omani teachers will not be funded by the institution as a precautionary institutional policy to reduce the impact of the international economic crisis (An Official Document by the Ministry of Higher Education, 2015, see Appendix 7). The new policies of reducing spending on professional development which has been currently implemented by the Ministry of Higher Education will hinder any initiatives of improvement in curriculum development and teacher professional development. Cheraghlou (2016, p. 101) alluded to the detrimental effects of economic crisis on education stressing policy makers should allocate resources to protect educational sectors and 'to actively recover human and social welfare losses associated with financial crisis.' Education is important to the national development of any country and reducing funding on educational projects including teachers' professional development will jeopardize the quality of English language teaching and learning which is seen as 'an important resource for the country's continued development' (Al Issa, 2006: 221).

The findings have also revealed some expatriate teachers denoted that they have not received proper induction when they began working at the college. This finding was supported by Al Gatrifi (2016) who indicated that there was no comprehensive induction programme for newly appointed teachers at CAS colleges. Based on my experience at CAS Sohar, new teachers were part of an induction programme, however, because some teachers are appointed in the middle of an academic semester, we tend to brief them on what they are expected to do which may not be sufficient for some teachers. On the significance of induction or orientation programs, Tuzlukova & Stead (2016) conducted a study to examine a teacher induction programme currently existing at the Language Center of Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. Their study provided a strong support for the impact of providing a comprehensive teacher induction programme on targeting the academic, professional and personal interests and needs of newly hired teachers during their transition in their teaching jobs.

The discussion on professional development cannot be approached without being associated with the area of curriculum development. The findings of the current research pointed out to the existence of some organizational issues such as the centralized leadership practiced at CAS colleges, absence of good communication channels, lack of teachers' appreciation as well as lack of teachers' voice in curriculum planning and design. Similar issues were indicated by Al Gatrifi (2016) in his study which was focused on the investigation of EFL teachers' perspectives about challenges to professional development in CAS colleges in Oman. This interrelatedness of results gives a clear indication the 'curriculum development and professional growth can't be separated' (El-Okda, 2005, p. 37).

6.6.1 Teacher Evaluation at CAS Colleges

The findings of the research revealed that the participants underlined the importance of collaborative teaching practices and specialized in-service training workshops as effective forms of professional development. In relation to the provision of professional development activities in the context of CAS colleges, current practices of professional development appear to be unstructured and not targeted to satisfy the existing needs of EAP teachers. A very significant issue to refer to is the relation between teacher evaluation and professional development. Despite the EAP curriculum being dictated under a dominant top-down policy which does not allow teachers to contribute to the design and the development of the curriculum, EAP teachers are free in their choice of their methodological preferences. Though it may seem favorable to many teachers to have their own space in their classrooms to innovate in the use of instructional methods, there is no strategy to ensure the effectiveness of teachers' methodological practices due to the absence of an effective form of teacher evaluation. The findings revealed how in the context of CAS colleges, the only form of teacher evaluation currently being used is the annual appraisal scheme which is completed by the heads of English Departments. The annual report has not been effective to indicate clear implications for staff professional development needs because EAP teachers are

not being informed of the outcomes of this evaluation scheme. The relationship between the efficiency of professional development and teacher evaluation is so important. This is because through teacher evaluation we can ensure course objectives are being achieved and teachers' needs are considered within the provision of appropriate forms of professional development.

Howard and Donaghue (2015) discussed the significance of observation and feedback as effective measures to support teachers throughout their careers in various ESL contexts. Though the use of observation and feedback as evaluation practices can positively inform the teaching practices of ESL teachers, my experience at CAS suggests that teachers appear to resent this form of evaluation. The diversity of teachers' perspectives on observation and feedback can vary 'because of different educational contexts, as well as the stage a teacher has reached within her/his career' (Howard and Donaghue, 2015, p. 3).

The significance of teacher evaluation system was also referred to in a study conducted by Hakim (2015) at the English Language Institute (ELI) at King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in Saudi Arabia. It was revealed that of the 30 teachers who participated in the research, most supported the concept of teacher evaluation and the appraisal process enhancing the level of teacher professional development which can lead to the advancement of teachers' methodological practices. However, the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the current schemes of teacher evaluation because they believed it was not effective in measuring their performance properly due to the lack of trained and objective observers. In the Saudi context indicated in the previous study, teacher evaluation is based on a transparent established process which is different from the current practice of teacher evaluation at CAS colleges. More efforts should be targeted by HODs and level coordinators to improve the teacher evaluation system at CAS colleges. Deciding on an appropriate evaluation scheme for EAP teachers should be one of the responsibilities of level coordinators who should seek feedback from teachers on the preferred evaluation scheme that they think can inform their teaching practices. The issue of teacher evaluation is essential and it needs to be

addressed in our context particularly because a number of new local and expat teachers may lack the necessary teaching experiences required to teach students at tertiary education in Oman. Determining the nature of any form of professional development must be supported by a teacher evaluation process to ensure professional development is relevant to the professional needs of teachers and the curricular needs of the EAP courses. Teacher evaluation and teachers' professional growth are interrelated because it is through teachers' evaluation that they are informed of the effectiveness of their instructional methods and accordingly become aware of areas of improvement. According to Grayng-Hammond (2013, p. 99), 'evaluation alone will not improve practice.' She explains further how it is only when evaluation is linked to the "teaching and learning system' continuous improvement of teachers can be achieved.

The lack of an evaluation scheme is not confined to the area of teacher evaluation at CAS colleges but was previously indicated through the findings on how EAP courses lack a continuous programme evaluation process. Therefore, a comprehensive programme evaluation scheme should be established in EAP courses to trace the progress and the effectiveness of all curriculum elements including teacher performance and pedagogical practices. The significance attributed to the staff evaluation scheme was indicated clearly in the Institutional Standards Assessment Manual issued by Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (2016). Under the section specified for stipulating indicators in the area of Performance Planning and Review, it was stated higher education institutions in Oman should implement 'a systematic approach to performance planning and review which is supported by performance planning policy and procedures that are readily accessible and communicated to staff. The approach enables the review of staff performance, the setting of staff performance objectives, and the identification of professional development needs' (Institutional Standards Assessment Manual, 2016, p. 64). The current practice of teacher evaluation which takes the form of an annual appraisal system does not comply with the objectives of staff performance planning and review because it does not help the institution or the staff members in identifying the professional development needs. Teacher evaluation at CAS

colleges needs to be systematic and transparent to ensure teachers' accountability and to promote their professional development.

6.6.2 The Need for Structured In-Service Training Programmes

The findings revealed that the participants believed in the effectiveness of providing in-service training as a form of professional development. It was previously stated there is a professional development programme provided by the Ministry of Higher Education which is responsible for funding eligible candidates for PhD scholarships from various CAS colleges. The scholarships' allocation system which is largely managed by the Human Resources Directorate in the Ministry is highly competitive and it is also subject to the availability of sufficient financial resources. As we stated earlier that due to the inevitable effects of the international economic crisis, the Ministry of Higher Education has taken procedures to reduce expenditure on professional development and it started encouraging the utilization of training venues located in the Ministry headquarter to minimize spending on external training programmes (An Official Document, Ministry of Higher Education, 2015, Appendix 7).

In the context of CAS colleges, EAP teachers do not receive pre-service or in-service training to develop teachers' EAP practices. There appears to be a lack of awareness on the type of training required for EAP teachers in higher education institutions in Oman. The issue of EAP teacher education and professional development is under-researched in the literature. Campion (2016) indicated 'whilst TESOL has demonstrated a more active interest in the education of its practitioners by contrast in EAP teachers continue to be largely invisible in the literature' (p. 59).

The Ministry's new policy of reducing the expenditure on training programmes will ultimately influence the provision of in-service training sessions which are believed to be effective not only to develop EAP teachers professionally but also to develop the EAP curriculum. It was earlier stated that the provision of professional

development should be aligned to the needs of the teaching staff members in any higher education institution. The findings revealed that the participants have realized the importance of aligning professional development to the existing needs of teachers. The need for focused in-service training programmes has been a major concern for the participants especially in the areas of assessment and materials development in which they seem to lack the necessary skills. The need for providing in-service training for assessment coordinators who are in charge of writing final exams has been identified as one of the major areas which should receive specialized sessions of professional development. There are other issues reported by the participants with regards to the current assessment practices implemented at CAS colleges which require providing on-going in-service programmes to provide the required support for EAP teachers and to promote their professional practices.

With respect to the areas of materials development, it should also be targeted by a professional development programme. EAP teachers always tend to rely on their own preferences and their intuition in designing or selecting supplementary materials for their EAP classes because they have not been introduced to any form of professional support to aid them on how to design and write EAP effective materials. EAP teachers may have a different perception of their professional development needs every semester. We need to consider the establishment of a framework for on-going professional development supported by a transparent teacher evaluation scheme to identify the arising needs of teaching staff members so professional development can be effectively integrated in the colleges. In a higher education context such as the one investigated in the current study, the identification of the needs of professional development shouldn't be confined to teachers' evaluation schemes but it should rather be driven by a process of negotiation of what EAP teachers themselves perceive their professional needs to be.

Due to the lack of a comprehensive framework of professional development at CAS colleges, we should seek external collaboration with other higher education

institutions in Oman such as Sultan Qaboos University and the Colleges of Technology. The experience of the Language Center of Sultan Qaboos University in Oman can provide an example of some of the best practices of professional development that are being implemented towards the achievement of high quality teaching practices. Al Busaidi & Tuzlukova (2014) discussed the importance of the professional development framework implemented by the Language Center Professional Development and Research Unit. The main achievement made by this Unit in the Language Center was 'soliciting views and opinions of the teachers about the potential areas for developmental training and current professional development initiative' through conducting a number of center-wide surveys (Al Busaidi & Tuzlukova, 2014, p. 78). If a similar approach for the identification of the professional development needs of EAP teachers at CAS colleges is applied, an alignment can be achieved between the professional development practices and the diverse needs along with the interests of the multi-cultural community of EAP teachers at our colleges. Encouraging the collaboration of teaching staff members through fruitful professional interactions can create a culture of professional development. Mac Donald (2016) highlighted the significance of creating a professional culture among EAP practitioners to enhance professionalism. The existence of a professional culture in EAP contexts can encourage EAP teachers 'to innovate in the realms of materials development, experimentation with technology, development of task-based learning activities, or participation in peer observation cycles' (Mac Donald, 2016, p. 112). The professional culture at CAS can be enhanced through encouraging EAP experienced teachers to take the initiative by organizing and facilitating various forms of professional development among their colleagues to promote a sustainable and continuous professional development.

6.6.3 Utilizing the Potential of the Virtual Environment to enhance PD

The main issue with using the technology which came up in the analysis is that an efficient technological infrastructure needs to be first provided at the CAS colleges before we can make use of the virtual environment for the purpose of curriculum development or professional development. E-learning has been regarded as an important element of the EAP programme in CAS colleges. This is why the job of the E-learning coordinators is seen as complementary to the job of the HODs and level coordinators in English Departments across the colleges. E-learning coordinators are responsible for the E-learning process through providing training for teachers and students to use the colleges' software. They are also in charge of providing E-learning training sessions such as using the blackboard as an interactive learning portal between the teachers and the students. Though technology is being used in English classes to some extent especially in listening sessions and in multi-media labs, the findings revealed that technology has not been effectively used in the EAP programme. The lack of the effective use of technology was discussed as one of the challenges which hinder EAP curriculum development. However, the issue of lack of effective use of technology seems to be also related to the area of professional development. E-learning coordinators have been encouraging EAP teachers to utilize the Blackboard which is the CAS electronic portal to share supplementary materials and to participate in on-line discussion groups through the Blackboard. Based on my experience with the use of technology in our EAP courses, the Blackboard programme has failed numerous times. Instances ranging from being unable to perform basic responsibilities such as entering the absence through the Student Information System (SIS) to checking our students written drafts through the SafeAssign have been frequently disrupted. Al Gatrifi's (2016) study which was concerned with the investigation of professional development in CAS colleges in Oman delineated the existence of some issues related to the use of technology. Al Gatrifi (2016, p. 182) discussed 'The main concern, however, focused on IT. There was a strong feeling among staff that English Department was the 'poor relative' in relation to the allocation of IT resources.' Demonstrating the importance and the effectiveness of

using the virtual environment in the area of curriculum development and teacher professional development is necessary but providing a decent efficient virtual environment at our colleges should be a priority for administrators and policy makers. In a study conducted by Tuzlukova & Hall (2016) investigating how to set up Virtual Professional Development (VPD) which would be best applied in the context of the Language Center in Sultan Qaboos University. The study was based on two three-hour workshops to gain feedback from participants on how they preferred the virtual approach of the professional development to be designed. They concluded that teachers were very positive on the affordances of the virtual professional development as a flexible and interactive learning space. If we can ensure that the technical problems and infrastructural issues are dealt with, the virtual professional development can provide an effective area for teacher professional development at CAS colleges. E-learning coordinators should involve EAP teachers in the selection of on-line interactive courses that are relevant to their needs and interests. The virtual space constitutes a collaborative zone of virtually supported professional communities. Virtual professional development can encourage the emergence of on-line communities of practice through which teachers who have shared beliefs, ideas and interests can collaborate and learn from each other. Utilizing the potential of the virtual environment through the design of interactive professional communities will allow the exchange of innovative pedagogical practices among EAP teachers. It will also facilitate interaction among EAP teachers from various CAS colleges who are not able to meet in person which might eventually lead to subsequent collaborative efforts to develop the EAP curriculum.

6.6.4 Professional Treatment of Teachers at CAS Colleges

The issue of the top-down leadership approach practiced at CAS colleges has been responsible for the marginalization of teachers and consequently influenced the professional treatment teachers are expected to receive. The analysis of the findings revealed that curriculum development and teacher professional

development cannot be separated because in reality they constitute 'a network of interacting system' (Richard, 2001, p. 41). In the analytical section devoted to EAP curriculum challenges, the centralized top-down leadership resulted in disregarding teachers' voice whilst representing a major challenge to the development of the curriculum. It is essential to consider at this point that the professional treatment of teachers is closely related to our discussion on challenges to professional development at CAS colleges. According to what was indicated in the findings, under the current situation at CAS, there seems to be an evident lack of institutional support for EAP teachers in terms of curriculum development and professional development. The professional treatment of EAP teachers should be considered by the programme administrators as a major issue particularly since it can affect their motivation in regards to taking any initiatives towards curriculum development and professional development. The professional treatment of teachers is about giving teachers a voice in the decision-making process at the institution and for all teaching staff members whether local or expat teachers, to feel they are being treated fairly and equally appreciated for their efforts. It was revealed in the findings, some expat teachers expressed feelings of job insecurity which prevented them from sharing their ideas on curriculum issues. This feeling of job insecurity which was apparent among expat teachers signifies a level of violation to the core principle of professional treatment of teachers. The main problem at CAS colleges lies in the lack of teachers' voice in the decision-making process. We need to improve the current system through facilitating more communication between the decision-makers and EAP teachers, with increased attention to the expat staff members. This is because the majority of the teaching staff members in the English programme at our colleges are expatriate teachers.

One of the studies conducted by Al Ajmi and Ali (2015) in the higher education context in Oman aimed at exploring some of the institutional, international, logistical, and pragmatic factors which have an impact on the quality of the academic research and publication. Though the study revealed a number of institutional, international and logistical factors which affect the quality of academic research which represents an important dimension of professional development,

there was no focus on the professional treatment of teachers as a contributing factor. The institutional pressure caused by the top-down system does not appear to be motivating for EAP teachers because it does not place any value on their feedback. Therefore, the lack of a feedback system which signifies the lack of teachers' voice in the institution is violating the professional treatment of teachers which we aspire for.

A similar allusion to the impact of the institutional policies on the professional treatment of teachers was indicated in a study by Al Asmari (2016). The study was focused on investigating teachers' perceptions and practices of professional development at Taif University English Language Center in Saudi Arabia. The analysis of the survey of 121 English language teachers has revealed that teachers expressed their concerns on not being acquainted with the institutional policies which relate to the provision of professional development in their institution. This study confirms the importance of considering teachers' voice to ensure their involvement in the advancement of their professional growth and also to ensure that the professional treatment of teachers isn't being affected. The issue of the professional treatment of teachers should be carefully considered by higher education institutions. This is because maintaining a professional environment where teachers are given a voice in the process of teaching and learning can increase their sense of belonging to their institution.

6.7 A Model of Curriculum Development in EAP

In the literature review chapter, a model of the curriculum design process by Nation and Macalister (2010) was discussed for its relevance to the approach of the current study. This model was explained in their book 'Language Curriculum Design' and is very influential compared to the various models of curriculum development discussed in the literature review because of its comprehensive approach to curriculum planning and design. The model referred to as 'A model of the parts of the curriculum design process' allows for a comprehensive analysis of

curriculum elements and provides a realistic interpretation of how possible issues arising from the curriculum can best be dealt with. The major curriculum issues which have emerged in the findings of the current research are reflected in the 'Language Curriculum Model' by Nation and Macalister. As illustrated in the following figure 1.2, the model consists of three outside circles (principles, environment, needs). This model not only provides a clear representation of the major curriculum elements which need to be considered in the process of curriculum development but also demonstrates the curricular guidelines which can transform the theoretical understanding of curriculum development into practice. The 'Language Curriculum Model' gives equal emphasis and attention to the basic curriculum elements which have been revealed to be problematic in the context of the current research. One of the points of strength characterized in this model is how curriculum elements are represented as interactive and interrelated. This highlights that any changes in any element of the curriculum will inevitably influence other curriculum elements as well. The circle which is located at the top of the model is 'Principles' and is intended to decide how the learning process can be encouraged in any language context. For the purpose of further analyzing this part of the curriculum design model, the authors offered twenty principles which according to Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 38) are 'supported by research and theory in any of three fields: second or foreign language learning, first language learning, and general educational research and theory.' Nation and Macalister highlighted a list of twenty principles which can be effective not only to guide the design of language teaching courses but also to evaluate existing courses and to help teaching practitioners reflect on their practices and professional development.

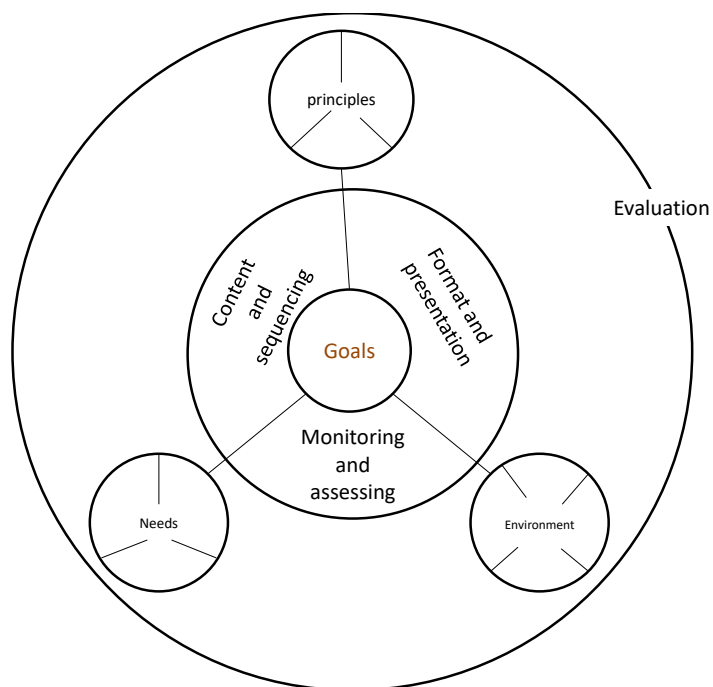


Figure 6.1: A Model of the parts of the curriculum design process (Nation & Macalister,2010)

According to the model, the element of **Goals** is located at the center of the inner circle. Goals are 'essential to decide why a course is being taught and what the learners need to get from it' (Nation & Macalister,2010, p. 6). The element of **Evaluation** has been highlighted in the model as an on-going process and is located in the bigger circle encompassing all the other elements within its scope. This model gives an indication to the evaluation process which does not appear to be effectively managed in the context of the current study. The basic elements of **Environment Analysis** and **Needs Analysis** have been carefully reviewed and analyzed especially since they are the most significantly relevant to the current study. The findings of the current study highlighted the importance of creating a constructive alignment between the various constituting elements of the EAP curriculum at CAS colleges which seems to be lacking in the currently implemented curriculum. The model designed by Nation and Macalister focuses on constructive alignment through clear identification of the needs of the learners targeted by **Needs Analysis** and the environment constraints or factors targeted

by the **Environment Analysis**. The environment analysis process intended by the model is meant to be comprehensive because it is concerned with dealing with factors related to (the learners, the teachers and the situation). The **Environment Analysis** intended to be achieved by this model is important for the current study because it concentrates on the importance of teachers' training which has emerged in the analysis as an area which requires further improvement to achieve curriculum development in EAP courses at the colleges. The element of **Needs Analysis** exposes three areas of focus which need to be carefully considered to achieve a comprehensive process of needs analysis which are represented as (Lacks, Wants, and Necessities). Despite this model providing an effective framework which can be used to develop the EAP curriculum at CAS colleges, there is an essential element which has not received a lot of emphasis in the 'Language Curriculum Design' model by Nation and Macalister. It was indicated in their explanation to the element of the needs analysis, a range of stakeholders can contribute to the needs analysis as sources of information such as present learners, past learners, teachers, future colleagues, or future assessors or teachers. Though the needs analysis process explained by the model alludes to the collaboration of both teachers and students as the major stakeholders in the process, a different kind of professional collaboration would seem more convenient to the orientation of our EAP programme at the CAS colleges. This study is founded on the belief that one of the significant factors for achieving the intended principle of constructive alignment is through setting professional collaborative partnerships with subject-area teachers because 'they are the people best placed to identify the target of EAP instruction' (Charles & Pecorari, 2016, p. 63). Therefore, the significance attributed to the element of collaboration of both EAP teachers with subject teachers is intended to highlight the role of both stakeholders in the needs analysis process which should guide the curriculum development process in EAP courses. In spite of the fact that the model presented in this study highlights the contribution of setting collaborative partnership among EAP teachers and subject-area teachers, the target of this collaboration should be ensuring the suitability of the EAP curriculum for the students linguistic and

academic needs. This means that the intended collaboration should constantly consider the students' feedback about various curriculum issues in the EAP programme so that this collaboration can be seen as a successful educational enterprise. This aspect of collaboration will be incorporated in a proposed model which should be seen as a slightly improved model informed by the model designed by Nation and Macalister. The proposed model which is oriented to create a conformity giving equal importance for the common core approach and the specialized language approach of EAP instruction will be illustrated in the conclusion chapter.

Summary

The current chapter was aimed at providing a deeper investigation on issues which influence the process of curriculum development in EAP courses in Oman. The chapter also highlighted some of the local and international issues which originate from the pertinent literature, and have influenced English language teaching in general and the development of EAP in the Omani higher education in particular. This chapter was intended to underline the interrelatedness between curriculum development and teacher professional development as two interactive processes in the context of the study. The chapter concludes by referring to a model from the literature on curriculum design created by Nation and Macalister (2010) for the aim of providing a structured framework to facilitate the evaluation of the current EAP programme and demonstrating the fundamentals of initiating a process of curriculum development in the EAP programme at CAS colleges.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to present a brief summary of the findings which provide answers for the main research questions investigated in the current study. It also provides a discussion on the contributions which this study is intended to achieve at a theoretical and a practical level. This chapter will also provide a discussion of some of the significant implications for both teachers and policy makers to improve EAP practices in the higher education context in Oman.

7.2 Summary of the Main Findings

The current study was oriented to the investigation of curriculum challenges confronted by EAP teachers at various CAS colleges. This study intended to explore the perspectives of EAP teachers and how curriculum challenges can best be resolved to allow for the establishment of a systematic process of curriculum development in the EAP programme. EAP teachers' contributions provided a thoughtful account of how curriculum development and teacher professional development are viewed as inseparable educational phenomena.

The findings related to the first research question which was focused on investigating EAP curriculum challenges showed that the prevailing centralized approach under which EAP courses are currently operating has negatively affected the practices of EAP curriculum development at CAS in Oman. This centralized top-down leadership approach was viewed as a dominant challenge which prevents the initiation of a process of curriculum development in the EAP programme. The centralized leadership is characterized by the lack of communication channels among various groups in the CAS institution and the lack of EAP teachers' voice in curriculum planning, design and evaluation. The findings

pertaining to the first research question also revealed evidentiary issues related to the planning and design of the EAP programme such as the existing discrepancy between the students' level and the EAP programme. Additionally, the lack of a clear direction in the guiding approach of the EAP programme was also identified as a problem and needs to be clarified to distinguish the current overlap in EAP/ESP practices. The Issue of irrelevance of the existing course materials to the students' disciplinary backgrounds was highlighted as another problematic area in the EAP curriculum. The study emphasizes the need to solve the current issues with assessment practices which lack validity and require further review to increase their quality as an effective assessment tools.

The findings provided insight to the second research question which was on the 'How' of curriculum development based on how EAP teachers conceptualized the basic elements of the curriculum development process. Adopting a needs analysis process should be the guiding principle to inform initiatives of curriculum development in the EAP programme. Incorporating a needs analysis approach in the current EAP programme can ensure the EAP curriculum is linguistically and academically aligned with the actual needs of the students. Moreover, the findings indicated that the merits of the needs assessment approach are not limited to the area of EAP curriculum development but this approach can also inform the provision of professional development opportunities. The research emphasized that all the curriculum elements of the EAP programme should be subject to a comprehensive process of programme evaluation after obtaining constructive feedback from both teachers and students. The current study argues for allowing EAP teachers the opportunity to have a voice in the curriculum which cannot only present a truthful evaluation about the adequacy of various curriculum elements but it can also be seen as an effective strategy towards EAP curriculum development.

The third research question intended to show how the provision of professional development can have an influence on curriculum development. The findings indicated that there is an inevitable interrelatedness between teacher-driven

curriculum development and teacher professional development in the context of the study. The findings revealed that there is a need for further improvement in the areas of materials and assessment in the EAP programme. The findings also highlighted the need to provide professional development opportunities for EAP teachers. This is because the findings reaffirmed that providing in-service training for EAP teachers can not only contribute in updating teachers' knowledge about current issues and debates in the EAP field but can also contribute to the EAP curriculum development which EAP administrators and practitioners aspire for (Al-Aufi, 2014, Al-Busaidi & Tuzluzkova, 2014).

The previous account of the main findings of this study disclosed that the centralized leadership approach can be seen as a dominant factor which is responsible for hindering curriculum development in EAP courses at the CAS colleges. The problem with the current approach is that it is running curricular matters on the basis of what policy makers think should be done rather than real life experiences of teachers and students who constitute the most important stakeholders in the educational cycle.

The following discussion will consider the implications which can be derived from the study in relation to policy and practice in the EAP context.

7.3 Implications

This section will be focused on presenting the main implications of the findings in the higher education context in Oman.

7.3.1 Implications for Policy Makers

The results of the current study suggest that policy makers in higher education and particularly those in charge of the EAP programme need to maintain appropriate communication channels with both teachers and students. This could be done

through considering their curricular concerns and feedback on curriculum related challenges in EAP courses. Policy makers should recognize that the involvement of both teachers and students in sharing their views and experiences on the existing curriculum can be one of the significant drivers to achieve curriculum development in EAP programmes in higher education.

Another important implication which can be inferred from the main findings is that Heads of English departments at CAS colleges should direct their efforts to encourage EAP teachers to set collaborative channels with subject teachers in various academic disciplines. Allowing for such collaborative efforts to exist can efficiently contribute in minimizing the lack of alignment which seems to be evident between the objectives of the English departments and the demands of the disciplinary context at CAS colleges. Policy makers should realize the significance of this collaboration which constitutes the main mechanism through which we can examine the adequacy of our EAP programme to satisfy the disciplinary requirements of the academic disciplines in terms of the learning materials and the assessment practices currently implemented in the EAP programme. An approach similar to the one discussed by Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) can be seen as a convenient scheme in which subject teachers can contribute as consultants through providing their feedback about the extent of adequacy of EAP curriculum elements to their expectations of students' needs in their respective academic departments. This sort of professional partnership between EAP teachers and subject-specialists can contribute in addressing the students' needs which 'helps produce courses that are more efficient, focused, and responsive' (Al Khaldi, 2016, p. 193).

Policy makers in the English programme should realize the need to establish a Committee for Curriculum Development which should be comprised of HODs, level coordinators, EAP and Foundation teachers as well as subject-specialists from various academic disciplines. Since this committee is oriented to evaluate the EAP curriculum which is provided for the students, the committee should include students as representatives of their respective EAP courses. The students'

membership in the Curriculum Development Committee can allow them to engage in meaningful interactions with EAP teachers on various curricular issues and can also raise the students' sense of academic responsibility. The committee should be responsible for evaluating the currently implemented Foundation programme and the EAP programme and should submit a list of recommendations to the programme director of the English programme. The programme director should hold a meeting with the members of the committee to discuss curriculum issues openly and accordingly suggest remedial strategies to deal with curricular issues. Due to the absence of a model for curriculum development in the EAP programme at CAS colleges, the committee should grasp the need to have a model in place to help both administrators and teachers deal with the existing challenges. The discussion provided in the curriculum literature indicates that the models proposed by Brown (1995), Richards (2001), and Nation and Macalister (2010) encapsulate theoretical perspectives of curriculum researchers which highlight that curriculum is a dynamic process of interactive systems. The curriculum cycle requires continuous evaluation by both teachers and administrators to ensure the compatibility of curriculum elements. Curriculum models not only assist both language planners and EAP practitioners in formulating a better understanding of curriculum challenges but can also enable them to think practically of how these curriculum challenges can best be resolved.

The findings revealed that one of the major issues with the current EAP curriculum implemented at CAS colleges is that some of the main components of the curriculum such as textbooks and assessment procedures are being outsourced to external educational institutions. Our commitment to the international agreements signed with the Ministry of Higher Education and external education providers has not only increased the over-reliance on the external expertise but also minimized the contribution of both level coordinators and EAP teachers in the curriculum. The issue with the currently implemented textbooks is twofold. This is because the content of the EAP textbooks is irrelevant to the students' cultural and disciplinary context. Furthermore, the over-reliance on inner-circle ELT materials has limited teachers' creativity to the transference of knowledge contained in these textbooks

(Harwood, 2005). According to Gray (2013) as a result for the increasingly marketing area of published materials, teachers cannot see the real use value of these ELT materials. The issue of overreliance on external expertise of curriculum providers in the area of EAP materials should be further considered by policy makers and English programme administrators. There is a need to hold annual evaluative meetings with teachers and coordinators at CAS to get their feedback on the implemented materials. It is also important that students should be involved in the process of evaluating the implemented materials by asking them to convey their feedback about various aspects related to the EAP materials at the end of each semester. Coordinators and teachers should then seek ways to attend to the learners' feedback to ensure the effectiveness of the EAP materials at CAS colleges. Policy makers should consider the value of providing specialized training for EAP teachers in materials design to fill any existing gaps with the currently implemented materials.

With respect to the area of assessment in the EAP in which the findings of the study have also revealed some major issues, there is a need to evaluate the current assessment practices and also to provide in-service specialized assessment workshops for assessment coordinators at CAS colleges. The problem with the current assessment practices in EAP courses lies in the fact that these practices are not being subjected to a process of evaluation which has led to the replication of assessment tools and consequently affected their quality. Such a process of evaluation cannot be achieved in the context of the study because assessment coordinators are not specialized in assessment and therefore lack the necessary knowledge and competencies to implement a sound evaluation process on the current assessment procedures in the EAP programme. What needs to be done at this level is to utilize the professional expertise of the external educational institutions which we have set educational cooperation with. The cooperation with external education providers can be made more effective in contributing to the development of the current EAP programme through inviting experts specialized in the area of materials development and assessment to conduct special training workshops for coordinators and EAP practitioners. This kind of cooperation will

help in minimizing the existing gaps in the current EAP textbooks and assessment practices and ensure EAP practitioners are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to help them deal with curricular challenges successfully.

The discussion of the findings provides insights about the influence attributed to the institutional impact of higher education institutions in the Omani context in hindering curriculum development at CAS colleges. The issue of Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programmes in Oman which was aimed for regulating foundation programmes in public and private higher education institutions has affected the development of the EAP programme at CAS colleges. Due to the absence of a set of regulating standards for EAP programmes in the higher education context in Oman, a lot of EAP curricular arrangements and practices have been derived from the academic standards which were set for foundation programmes. The findings of the current study revealed that the 'disciplinary context' incorporated in the EAP curriculum at CAS colleges is not meant to be reflected nor addressed in the existing academic standards of the foundation programmes. Therefore, a collaborative effort is recommended among private and public higher education institutions in Oman in which EAP courses are provided in an attempt to decide on a set of regulating standards for the various EAP programmes in these institutions. This form of local benchmarking across various higher education institutions can regulate current EAP practices in higher education institutions and can also constitute a professional negotiation platform which can promote curriculum development in the area of teaching English for Academic Purposes. Conducting regular meetings with representatives from EAP programmes provided at various private and public higher education institutions can be seen as a convenient strategy to keep track of the kinds of challenges encountered by EAP teachers in these institutions and to exchange the experiences of EAP practitioners on some of the best practices which have proven to be efficient in dealing with EAP curriculum challenges.

7.3.2 Implications for Practice at CAS

7.3.2.1 Collaboration between EAP Practitioners and Subject-Teachers

One of the significant issues which became evident through the discussion of the findings is that the Foundation programme at CAS colleges appear to be operating in isolation from the credit-bearing EAP programme. This gap which has been associated with EAP curriculum challenges needs to be resolved through a comprehensive evaluation of both the foundation programme and the EAP programme. It is important to ensure that the foundation programme has contributed to the development of students' skills to enable them to cope with the requirements of the EAP courses. Thus, interactive channels of communication between EAP practitioners and foundation teachers should be encouraged and accordingly reflected in the overall policies of the English Programme at CAS colleges.

The results of the study revealed that the current EAP programme at CAS has not fully addressed the disciplinary context which is seen as an integral element for the development of EAP courses. EAP practitioners could provide an assessment of the linguistic and academic skills expected of the students in EAP courses. On the other hand, subject-specialists can provide a true account of the discipline specific requirements expected of the students in their major studies. Therefore, it is recommended that subject-specialists from the various academic disciplines be encouraged to contribute their ideas to HODs of English Departments at the colleges. HODs should accordingly consider the feedback provided by subject-specialists to achieve a constructive alignment between the EAP programme and students' academic disciplines. One strategy which can be implemented to achieve an alignment through the collaboration of both EAP practitioners and subject-specialists is to conduct regular meetings at the beginning of every academic semester to discuss curriculum issues. These meetings should be attended by HODs of English departments as well as HODs of academic departments to allow for both parties to have a say with regards to the EAP curriculum issues and to suggest an effective action plan to solve these issues. A

more practical strategy such as the 'subject-specialist informant method' or the 'consultative method' indicated by Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) should be implemented to allow for constructive input from both EAP teachers as well as subject-teachers to enrich the provided curriculum.

7.3.2.2 Teacher-Driven Professional Development

In view of the findings of this research, it is recommended that a framework for EAP teachers' professional development be established at the CAS colleges. It is also recommended that this framework be assigned a special committee which should be in charge of implementing the objectives of the professional development framework. To ensure that the objectives of this framework are aligned with the needs of the EAP teachers, it is important to involve EAP teachers themselves to express their ideas on their needs and interests they want the professional development framework to include.

The findings of the study also revealed that providing teacher-professional development can contribute positively in the area of EAP curriculum development particularly if professional development has been oriented towards resolving the problematic aspects of the EAP curriculum. Though the findings alluded to the significance of providing institution driven professional development opportunities for EAP teachers, professional development should be teacher driven and can also assist in developing the curriculum along with helping teachers grow professionally. Attending international conferences and providing in-service training workshops can be effective forms of professional development. However, institution driven professional development should not limit the scope of teacher professional development to what the institution can afford to provide. As a consequence of the spread of the international economic crisis, the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman has been following some measures to reduce funding on certain areas including professional development. This means professional development should be seen as a professional responsibility of EAP teachers not

only as an institutional responsibility. On-going meetings with EAP teachers in which they can openly share their curricular concerns can contribute to the development of EAP courses and can also encourage the establishment of a professional atmosphere in the EAP community. HODs should realize the importance of organizing reading circles among EAP teachers through which they are encouraged to read widely to update their theoretical knowledge in the area of EAP and to enhance their teaching practices in EAP courses. To maximize the benefit of these reading circles, HODs should organize frequent discussions through which expat and Omani teachers can share the fruits of their knowledge and expand their intellectual capacities. Encouraging the spread of reading circles will not only stimulate the thinking of EAP teachers to promote their pedagogical practices but can also stimulate their contribution in research initiatives which are currently lacking in the CAS context.

The findings also indicated that newly appointed EAP teachers do not receive proper orientation before they start their teaching duties at CAS which has been regarded as a challenge to some. The establishment of orientation programmes for EAP teachers should be one of the objectives of the professional development committee which was discussed previously. This is because such programmes not only help in providing newly appointed Omani teachers with knowledge about their expected pedagogical practices but they also help expat teachers develop a cultural awareness which can help them better understand the EAP context at CAS colleges.

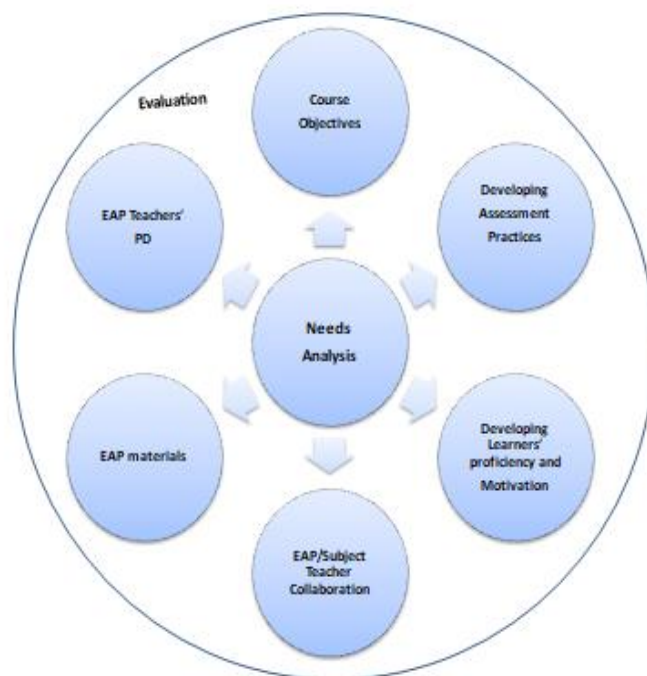
An important implication which the study suggests is that teachers should focus on involving students in the EAP curriculum because their current involvement seems to be superficial rather than real as indicated in the findings. Students are expected to provide their feedback about curriculum and the teachers at the end of every academic semester through filling out an on-line survey. However, this mechanism did not help in identifying the students' curricular concerns, preferences, or interests in relation to the EAP curriculum because the results of these surveys have not been articulated to EAP teachers. Unless EAP teachers

are fully aware of their students' concerns and preferences about the EAP curriculum, curriculum development is difficult to achieve in the context of the study. The ideal form of needs analysis which should be initiated at the context of the study is similar to undertaking a research project. EAP administrators, practitioners and representatives from the academic departments should participate in a research endeavor utilizing a set of data-collecting methods which are more feasible to the context at CAS. This research should be aimed at identifying the students' English skills which need further development, academic knowledge and skills and whether there are any specific needs to be addressed. Charles and Pecorari (2016) indicated methods such as surveys, interviews, observations, textual analysis and diagnostic tests can be used in the needs analysis. The findings of the study alluded to the existence of a need to further consider conducting a process of needs analysis. Therefore, needs analysis at CAS colleges should be seen as a continuous educational strategy to support the development of the curriculum through utilizing data-gathering methods that are more appropriate to the context.

7.4 Contribution to Existing Knowledge

The current study can be regarded as an addition to the ever growing body of research in the area of EAP curriculum development. The findings obtained from this research provide valuable insights about how to better conceptualize curriculum processes in the context of EAP instruction. This study provides a valuable account of the perspectives of EAP practitioners about EAP curriculum planning, design, and development which are still under-researched in the local Omani context. There is a scarcity of studies and research publications intended for the investigation of curriculum development of EAP courses in the Omani context. So, this study was aimed to investigate how various EAP teachers in various Colleges of Applied Sciences perceive the challenges that have affected the quality of teaching and learning in EAP courses.

The findings of the study revealed a number of challenges pertaining to EAP curriculum evaluation, implemented EAP textbooks, assessment practices and the lack of professional development. The way these curriculum challenges have been analyzed can allow policy makers, EAP practitioners as well as subject teachers of various academic disciplines to develop a comprehensive assessment of EAP curriculum related issues to better respond to these challenges. This study investigated the relationship between the provision of teacher professional development and curriculum development. The contributions of the study are not limited to the area of curriculum development but provide an investigation on professional development practices in the context of the colleges. This study adds to the EAP literature at the international as well as the local level. With respect to the international body of literature which was concerned with the theoretical conceptualization of curriculum development, it seems that curriculum models which have been widely discussed by curriculum researchers were not specifically designed to address curriculum issues in EAP programmes but instead adopt a general approach to the development of English language programmes. Therefore, the current study proposes a theoretical model which not only contributes to the international EAP literature in general but to the EAP literature in the local context especially that a model for EAP curriculum development is lacking in the higher education context in Oman.



7.1. A Proposed Model for EAP Curriculum Development

Figure 7.1 illustrates the model of curriculum development presented by the current study which is informed by the model of 'Language Curriculum Design' created by Nation and Macalister (2010) which was analyzed in the literature review chapter. Despite that their model was not being oriented to EAP curriculum development, it presents a comprehensive assessment of all integral curriculum components which are represented as a set of interactive and interrelated circles. Although the model presented by Nation and Macalister (2010) can inform various stakeholders on the various curriculum processes which can lead to a better understanding of existing curriculum challenges, it is still limited in its approach to the curriculum development intended for EAP programmes. The model proposed by the current study as illustrated in figure 7.1 is informed theoretically by the model presented by Nation and Macalister but has a different approach in terms of the prioritized curriculum elements which were highlighted in the findings. Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 6) decided "Goals" should be at the center of the curriculum process. Their decision is justifiable because their model can be very informative in the area of curriculum design 'to decide why a course is being

taught and what the learners need to get from it.” The element of “needs analysis” is placed at the center of the curriculum development process. This is because the findings indicated that the first step towards EAP curriculum development should start with a needs analysis process oriented to carefully review the problematic areas in the EAP existing curriculum.

The model presented by the current study is meant to cover EAP related issues which were not addressed in the model provided by Nation and Macalister particularly with respect to aligning the EAP programme to the students’ disciplinary backgrounds. The findings of the current study indicated that creating a constructive alignment between the EAP programme and the disciplinary context of academic departments at CAS colleges should be targeted in the needs analysis process. The model gives equal focus to curriculum elements which should be considered in facilitating the desired alignment. Figure 7.1 illustrates that to achieve a constructive alignment between the EAP programme and the academic disciplines, a careful reviewing process should be targeted at the course objectives, assessment practices, the learners, course materials as well as teachers’ professional development. A very important element which is incorporated in the model is the collaboration between EAP practitioners and subject area teachers. This particular element which is seen as an integral element in EAP context has not received much attention in the model provided by Nation and Macalister. The model presented by the current study provides a significant theoretical contribution to the EAP literature. This model is more convenient to be implemented for the development of EAP programmes in higher education institutions.

The model provided by the current study not only contributes to the theoretical body of knowledge in the area of EAP curriculum development but also provides a number of practical contributions. Since the area of EAP curriculum development at the higher education context is under researched, this model can be seen as the first research endeavor which tackles the investigation of EAP curriculum challenges in Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. Therefore, the model

presented by the current study offers a visual map exposing the various processes involved in curriculum development which is expected to inform EAP current practices in various higher education institutions in Oman. The model also offers a blueprint for policy makers through which they can reflect on currently implemented policies at CAS colleges.

7.5 Limitations in the Current Study

There are a number of limitations which need to be indicated in relation to the current study. The first limitation is related to the design which was limited to conducting the qualitative inquiry in only two research sites which were College of Sohar and College of Rustaq. Interviews were confined to the EAP teachers who were teaching at these two colleges. Involving more teachers from other CAS colleges in the interviewing stage could have enriched the collected data and contributed to the understanding of EAP curriculum challenges which this study was oriented to investigate.

Another limitation was related to the data analysis stage in the current research. After the distribution of the questionnaire which was mainly focused on retrieving quantitative data about the investigated research constructs, a large number of the participants provided lengthy answers to the open-ended questions in the last section of the questionnaire. The qualitative input has been carefully arranged from the questionnaire in a table and merged in the results chapter. Despite that most of the provided answers were valuable to the research investigation, there was no way to track those participants who provided interesting thoughts after the on-line questionnaire was completed. This could have led to the distortion of some important qualitative data which could have been further investigated in the semi-structured interviews.

Another limitation was thinking of a visual shape to illustrate the model which this study proposes. Though it may appear to be an easy process for some researchers, it was very challenging for me. The main issue was not in my inability

to think of a logical figure to better demonstrate my model and justify but rather the complexity of dealing with visual forms after spending years working with words through extensive reading and writing. It took my mind a long time to transfer the understanding of the findings and the logic behind my proposed model into a clear visual form. I had to see various models and attempted to see the relationship among the various items in these models so that I can be able to provide a clear logical model which can look visually convincing for the readers.

7.6 Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, some recommendations are put forward highlighting the potential for further research. First, it seems that there are not many studies conducted in the area of EAP curriculum development. It is important to state that the area of EAP curriculum development is vast and there are a number of sub-areas within EAP which are still not being investigated including areas of EAP curriculum planning, EAP materials development and EAP assessment practices. Though the current research exposes a number of problematic aspects pertaining to the areas of materials development and assessment, these significant areas need to be further investigated in the Omani higher education in general and at CAS in particular. More studies are needed to investigate issues of validity of assessment scales as well as the issue of EAP teachers' assessment literacy in the Omani context to contribute to the EAP local and international literature.

The findings of the study indicated that while using technology to enhance teaching and learning is implemented in EAP courses at CAS colleges, there is a need for more technological integration to develop the EAP curriculum. Therefore, more studies are still needed to assess the impact of using the virtual learning environment in promoting the efficiency of EAP courses. The current study though has highlighted the significance of utilizing the potential of the virtual environment as a powerful interactive learning space for EAP teachers' professional

development; this issue has not received sufficient focus in the current study. More studies need to be oriented towards the investigation of the effect of utilizing the virtual environment to enhance the area of EAP teachers' professional development at the CAS context.

Another important area which requires further attention is the investigation oriented to EAP teachers' pedagogies. This issue of lack of focus in the EAP literature was highlighted by Todd (2003) who denoted that most of the EAP studies are focused on the 'What' of EAP rather than the 'How'. The current study alluded to this issue of EAP teachers' methodology but this area needs further investigation. More studies in 'How' teachers' methodologies should best enhance the quality of EAP courses can yield valuable contribution to the EAP literature.

The findings of the research indicated also that students' motivation in EAP classes emerged as one of the issues confronted by teachers in the EAP programme at CAS. This gives an indication that this area should be approached to uncover in-depth the reasons behind students' lack of motivation in EAP courses at CAS colleges. In relation to the issue of students' motivation, teachers' motivation was also reported as an evident issue at the colleges which impacts curriculum development. Therefore, future research should be conducted to investigate further the factors which can motivate EAP teachers so that the results obtained from such research studies can inform and enhance the practice of EAP teachers.

7.5 Reflecting on the PhD Journey

For the past four years of my life, I have been predominantly occupied with the topic of my PhD dissertation more than anything else in the world. Although the journey was not without challenges and breakdowns, moments of intellectual

enlightenments and the joy I felt after accomplished chapters have made this journey a sweet, unforgettable learning experience.

I recall how confused I was when I first started thinking about the topic of my research and having a set of contradicting assumptions on how my research investigation can best be approached. At the beginning of my PhD when I started reading about my topic, I remember how hard it was for me to draw the connections and to see the logical links between the philosophical conceptions of curriculum and the objectives of my research project. However, the more I started becoming immersed with the philosophical discussions of curriculum in the literature; I realized how transcendent and complex the word curriculum is. I can truly say that throughout this transformative learning experience, I not only acquired extensive theoretical knowledge but I also learned how to use my critical intellectual lens every time I come across a curriculum perspective in the literature.

I believe I have learned how to be open in the way I thought about my topic and I have also learned how to adopt critical thinking as a skill and not simply as a research technique. When I first embarked on my research, I thought my topic would mainly be focused on curriculum development in the EAP programme provided at CAS colleges in Oman. During the first official meeting with my supervisor, he pointed out that investigating the area of professional development which I thought wasn't within my research agenda, should be addressed as a significant factor in my curriculum investigation. I still remember after my first supervisory encounter, I was not totally convinced that the area of professional development was related to the kind of investigation I intended to do. Even after submitting the literature review chapter in which I have included a whole section about teacher professional development, I was not able to clearly see the extent of interrelatedness between curriculum development and professional development. It is only when I reached the last two chapters of my thesis; the data analysis and discussion, I began to fully comprehend how closely interrelated these two phenomena are. I feel the PhD journey has truly expanded my intellectual horizon and has equipped me with the theoretical and methodological tools which have

enabled me to solve my research puzzle. The intellectual merits attributed to the PhD journey go beyond the production of a genuine research project. I feel I have the knowledge to determine my ontological and epistemological assumptions if I am confronted with any issue which I would like to further investigate in a research paper or a scholarly publication.

On a personal level, the impact of this PhD journey has been very positive with regards to dealing with worries and difficult circumstances. During the first year of my PhD programme, I did not know how to manage my stress and was worried that I could only see the journey as highly demanding and joyless. I feel that I was a fortunate person because during my PhD journey in the UK, I met very special colleagues in the programme some of whom have become very close friends of mine. They have been so supportive to me not only at the study level but also at the personal level. It is because of those special people I was honored to have along the journey that I began to see the positive side of my journey and this positive transformation in my thinking has been also reflected positively in my progress. The things which I thought will be challenging have proven to not be as challenging as I thought they were. I have acquired a clever technique of adopting positive thinking every time I felt stressed or anxious and fortunately it has successfully worked for me. My PhD has been truly a rewarding and unforgettable learning experience.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

A Questionnaire about “Investigating Teachers’ Perceptions about EAP Curriculum Challenges in CAS Colleges in Oman”

Dear Participant:

This questionnaire is the initial instrument in the stage of data collection for my PhD thesis. It is designed to elicit your perceptions about EAP (English for Academic Purposes) aspects of the curriculum which are considered to be challenging at Colleges of Applied Sciences and to explore your views on teachers’ roles in the process of curriculum development in the context of the current research. This questionnaire focuses only on EAP courses that are taught in Year1 and Year2.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections: A) demographic questions, B) close-ended questions, and open-ended questions. You are kindly requested to answer all the items under each section in this questionnaire. The information that you will provide will be treated as confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Your cooperation is much appreciated.

Nadia Al Issaei

Nadiais.soh@cas.edu.om

Phone No: 96466661

Part A: Demographic questions

Please select from the following options.

1. What is your nationality?.....

Please choose from the following options (*Highlight the answer that best relates to you*)

2. How long have you been teaching English?

- A. Less than 1 year
- B. 1-5 years
- C. 5-10
- D. More than 10 years

3. What is your educational background?

- A. A qualification in (ELT) (e.g. TESOL, CELTA, DELTA, Trinity TEFL certificate)
- B. BA in English language teaching or related fields
- C. Master's Degree in English language teaching or related fields
- D. PhD in English language teaching or related fields

4. How long have you been teaching EAP at CAS? Select an option.

- A. Less than 1 year
- B. 1-5 years

C. 5-10

D. More than 10 years

5. Have you received any specified training prior to teaching EAP? Yes/No

If you answered with Yes specify.

Part B: Teachers Perceptions about EAP Curriculum Challenges

Read the following statements carefully and select the answer that best represents your opinion.

Please tick one box for each statement below to show how much you agree or disagree with it.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
1. Some elements of the EAP curriculum provided at CAS are considered to be challenging.					
2. EAP courses at CAS are designed to suit the students' linguistic and academic needs.					
3. The main purpose of EAP courses at CAS should be satisfying the linguistic demands of major departments.					

4. A learner-centered approach should be the guiding educational principal for EAP courses at CAS.					
5. EAP courses at CAS should be informed by a needs analysis process.					
6. Learning resources such as textbooks, audio and visual resources are sufficient to enhance the students' academic proficiency.					
7. EAP teachers are involved in the revision and evaluation of existing course outlines.					
8. EAP teachers are encouraged to develop supplementary materials for EAP courses.					
9. Supplementary materials designed by teachers are being evaluated and incorporated into the EAP courses.					
10. EAP teachers are involved in the process of writing exams.					
11. I think that English Departments at CAS colleges have a clear plan for EAP curriculum development.					
12. The main task for EAP teachers in CAS colleges is the implementation of the					

existing curriculum.					
13. Teachers' views and comments about areas of improvement in EAP courses are being considered by HODs and the program director.					
14. EAP teachers in CAS colleges are encouraged to develop various curriculum elements.					
15. Curriculum development requires systematic evaluation of various curriculum elements.					
16. EAP teachers in CAS colleges have enough time to do research and participate in conferences.					
17. EAP teachers should be encouraged to work in collaborative teams to solve various curriculum elements.					
18. EAP teachers have the necessary knowledge to contribute to curriculum development.					
19. I have had CAS provided pre-service training in EAP when I first started teaching at CAS colleges.					
20. EAP teachers undergo in-service training programs and workshops at CAS					

colleges.					
21. Providing professional development opportunities for teachers can contribute to EAP curriculum development.					
22. Experienced teachers should be placed at the center of EAP curriculum development.					
23. Professional development opportunities are being fairly distributed among Omani and expatriate EAP teachers.					
24. Attending relevant conferences and workshops provide a great opportunity for EAP teachers to update their knowledge and exchange their teaching experiences.					
25. EAP teachers can make a valuable contribution in the context of EAP curriculum development.					
26. I think that EAP teachers can minimize curriculum issues through their participation in action research.					
27. I think that curriculum challenges can be solved by establishing collaborative teams of EAP teachers across the colleges.					

28. I think professional development plans at CAS colleges should account for EAP teachers' training needs.					
29. I think that English departments at CAS colleges need to discuss openly issues of curriculum development with EAP teachers.					
30. I like to be involved in the decisions that relate to EAP curriculum development at CAS colleges.					

Part C: (open-ended questions)

Please provide your answers to the following questions:

1. What do you think are the most challenging aspects of EAP courses which might hinder curriculum development at the colleges?
2. How do you think the process of curriculum development could best be achieved at CAS?

3. What is the role that you want to play in the process of EAP curriculum development?
4. In your opinion, what are the most important professional development activities that can contribute to the improvement of EAP courses at CAS?
 - This questionnaire will be followed by a series of semi-structured interviews, would you like to share further views about this topic in the coming stage of interviewing? If you wish to take part, you are kindly requested to provide your contact information below.

Name:

College:

E-mail:

Phone No:

Your participation is highly appreciated

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Background Information

1. Would you please introduce yourself? Tells us about your educational background and your teaching experience?

Challenging Elements in EAP curriculum

1. What does curriculum mean to you?
2. To what extent do you think EAP courses are designed to enhance the students' linguistic and academic needs?
3. What aspects you would like the curriculum to focus more on?
4. Can you tell us about who designs EAP courses? Who decides on the textbooks, course objectives, and assessment procedures? Are EAP teachers involved in this process?
5. How will you describe your teaching technique in these courses? Is it prescribed to you or you have the freedom to use your own technique?
6. Do you use supplementary materials in your EAP classes and Why? What sort of materials have you designed? How effective you find them to be?
7. Tell us more about the support provided for EAP teachers to enhance the delivery of the curriculum in CAS?

Curriculum Development at CAS

8. In your opinion, what does the process of curriculum development involve? Would you like to share your previous EAP curriculum development experiences, if any?
9. What model of leadership is currently in place at CAS? Top-down or bottom-up? Do you think it affects the process of curriculum development?
10. Regarding your teaching load, how many hours do you teach every week? How do you feel about your workload?
11. Can you tell us if there is any distinction between Expat teachers and Omani teachers with respect to asking for changes or expressing opinions related to curricular issues?
12. Have you ever attempted to convey your feedback regarding any curriculum issue at CAS? Tell us about it?
13. Are you satisfied with your current employment contracts?
14. What do you feel about the working conditions of EAP teachers at CAS?
15. Will you be willing in taking part in any future plans of EAP curriculum development at CAS in addition to your teaching responsibilities?
16. Do EAP teachers at CAS get rewards or incentives for taking initiatives to develop the curriculum? Would you like to be financially rewarded for developing the curriculum?
17. Do you feel that the general work atmosphere at CAS is conducive for EAP teachers to think of ways to improve the current EAP curriculum?
18. Curriculum development requires continuous evaluation of various curriculum elements. What is your reflection about this?
19. Based on your experience at CAS, to what extent do you think teachers play a role in the process of curriculum development? Tell us about the role that you want to play in EAP curriculum development? What else would you like to do with respect to EAP curriculum development at CAS?

Relating Professional Development to Curriculum development at CAS

20. What is your understanding of professional development? Do you think it is important and why?
21. Have you ever been involved in professional development at CAS or before joining CAS? Tell us about it? How effective was the experience?
22. What are the professional development activities that can contribute to the improvement of EAP courses at CAS?
23. What suggestions would you like to give to promote professional development for EAP teachers at CAS?

Appendix 3 Ethical Documents



Graduate School of Education

Title of Research Project: 'Investigating the Perceptions of EAP Teachers about Curriculum Challenges in Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman'

27/7/2015

Dear Colleague,

My name is Nadiya Al Issaei and I am a P.h.D student, in the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, United Kingdom, and I am investigating the most problematic areas in EAP courses at Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman. In particular, my research study intends to explore the challenges associated with EAP courses at CAS which may affect the establishment of a successful process of curriculum development. In addition to the primary goal of this study which is focused on providing a better understanding of EAP curriculum challenges, this research is aimed at developing a framework for curriculum development which is based on establishing a link between curriculum development and providing for effective teaching through appropriate chances of professional development for EAP teaching practitioners at CAS.

As part of the research project, the views and perceptions of EAP teachers about existing curriculum challenges will be sought through an one-line questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. You might be asked to participate in one of these instruments if you wish to take part in this study. I would like to emphasize that involvement in the study is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw their consent at any time. Information and data obtained will be analysed by Nadiya Al Issaei solely for the purpose of this study and will not affect any participant anyhow. The final written thesis will ensure anonymity by not using any actual names or identifying characteristics of any participants. This letter gives you some information about my study and seeks your permission to be involved in my P.h.D research. Please read the consent form in the following page, indicate approval for your participation in the section specified for that and write your details below.

I am looking forward to hearing from you. Thanks a lot.

Nadiya Al Issaei

Graduate School of Education

Consent Form

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

There is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed.

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me.

Any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations.

All information I give will be treated as confidential

The researcher will make every effort to preserve any anonymity.

Please indicate approval for your participation in the study by deleting as applicable.

I wish/ I do not wish to participate in the study titled: 'Investigating the Perceptions of EAP

teachers about Curriculum Challenges in Colleges of Applied Sciences in Oman'

.....

.....

(Signature of participant)

(Date)

.....

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher.

Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

Contact phone number of researcher: 00447456979966, 0096896466661

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact:

The Researcher: Nadiya Al Issaei at the above mentioned number or email her at nsaa202@exeter.ac.uk

Or The Researcher's Supervisor: Dr. Salah Troudi by sending him an email at S.Troudi@exeter.ac.uk

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorized third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be anonymised.

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Investigating the Perceptions of EAP teachers about Curriculum Challenges in Colleges of Applied Sciences

Researcher(s) name: Nadiya Al Issaei

Supervisor(s): Dr Salah Troudi,
Dr Esmeeel Abdollahzadeh

This project has been approved for the period

From: 23/06/2015
To: 01/11/2016

Ethics Committee approval reference:

D/15/16/09


Signature: Date: 14/09/2015
(Dr Philip Durrant, Chair, Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee)

Appendix 4: Ministry's Letter

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Higher Education
Directorate General of colleges
of Applied Sciences



سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التعليم العالي
المديرية العامة لكليات العلوم التطبيقية

التاريخ: 6/08/2015

الرقم: 1/6 / 1103 / 10 ص د

المحترمين

الفاضل/ عملاء كليات العلوم التطبيقية

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد ،،،

الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة الباحثة/ نادية العيسائي

إشارة إلى إبتعاث الفاضلة/ نادية العيسائي لنيل شهادة الدكتوراه في الملكة المتحدة، فإننا نرجو منكم التكرم بتسهيل مهمة المذكورة لتطبيق أدوات البحث المعنون ب:

"Investigating the Perceptions of EAP teachers about Curriculum Challenges in Colleges of Applied Sciences"

و تتضمن الدراسة توزيع استبانات على مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية في الكليات الست، كما تتضمن إجراء مقابلات مع عينة مكونة من 20 مدرس لغة إنجليزية من كليتي صحار و الرستاق.

شاكرين لكم دوام تعاونكم.

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام و التقدير

د. عبدالله بن علي الشبلي
مدير عام كليات العلوم التطبيقية



نحو تعليم عال ذي جودة عالية يلبي متطلبات التنمية المستدامة

سلطنة عُمان ص.ب: ٨٢ روي - الرمز البريدي: ١١٢ - هاتف ٢٤٣٤٠٥٨٠ / فاكس ٢٤٣٤٠٥٧٨

Sultanate of Oman, P.O.Box: 82 Ruwi, PC 112, Tel: 24340580 / Fax 24340578 www.mohe.gov.om

Appendix 5: Analysis of open-ended questions

1. Challenges to EAP Curriculum Development	2. How Curriculum Development could best be achieved at CAS?	3. Role that teachers want to play in EAP Curriculum Development?	4. What are the most important PD activities that can contribute to improve EAP courses at CAS?
<p>1. Gap between students' current L2 abilities and the abilities required of them in EAP courses.</p> <p>2. Gap between the content of EAP curriculum and the students' actual needs in their major disciplines in light of the expected market needs.</p> <p>3. The centrality of decision making with respect to EAP curriculum development. (Top-down approach, teachers are not involved in curriculum development, decision makers are not aware of the current situation at the colleges).</p> <p>4. Issues with assessment policies that are currently implemented at CAS colleges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final exams in EAP courses are centralized and they test 	<p>1. Reviewing the current curriculum elements (objectives, syllabus, learning materials and assessment protocols) involving all EAP teachers who should express their feedback openly in order to gauge any pressing curriculum issues. This stage should take into consideration that EAP courses have to address the actual linguistic and academic needs of the students.</p> <p>2. EAP course objectives need to be revisited and rewritten based on the recommendations that were raised by the teachers in the first stage. After finalizing the course objectives, clear set of objectives have to be agreed upon. These objectives should move beyond the textbook to cater for the different</p>	<p>The majority of EAP teachers who took part in the questionnaire indicated their willingness to be involved in EAP curriculum development and their answers are summarized as follows:</p> <p>1. A large number of the participants said that they would like to provide their comments and their feedback regarding curriculum. "I can share my comments and suggest ways to enhance the curriculum."</p> <p>2. A large number of the participants expressed their willingness to be part of collaborative team work aimed at improving the EAP curriculum. "I'd love to have the opportunity to organize a discussion platform for all</p>	<p>1. Open discussions among EAP teachers which are intended to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences. "In my case, for instance, the majority of my teaching experience has been in a truly 'team-focused' environment. I do not see this approach nor these values being seriously adopted by the foreign teaching staff, in particular. Most will say that they prefer a 'team teaching approach' but in reality, other than exchanging routine information about a shared class of students, very little sharing takes place amongst the foreign teachers. This is a very serious impediment for any curriculum-building environment."</p>

<p>knowledge covered in the textbook. They don't reflect students' proficiency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current continuous assessment project is time consuming and challenging for the students. "Students are expected to complete a good report/essay of about 1000 words while their English does not enable them to write a few accurate sentences. • Lack of more effective assessment tools. • Current assessment protocols have been in place for many years without any modifications. <p>5. The lack of a clear progress plan for EAP courses at CAS colleges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EAP courses are solely built around textbooks rather than independent and well-designed learning objectives. "Our look at a course should move beyond a textbook, where the former is carefully planned around the learners' needs and the latter is simply used as a learning tool." • EAP courses are not established on a process of needs analysis that takes into account learners' needs. • "The lack of any kind of connection, consultation or interaction with other degree departments to be sure we are aligned with the 	<p>learner needs. All EAP teachers as well as students should be made aware of these objectives before the beginning of the semester.</p> <p>3. A needs analysis process should be conducted involving EAP teachers, and content-based teachers, current students as well as former students. This phase should aim at determining the needs of the students which should be fully addressed and covered in the EAP curriculum. This phase can also involve employers who can contribute by providing their views on the professional skills expected of CAS graduates.</p> <p>4. Establishing a professional committee comprising of EAP teachers to decide of the kinds of supplementary materials that can complement the current textbooks.</p> <p>5. Establishing cross-college teams with a variety of experience levels to constantly analyze, assess and make recommendations for EAP curriculum development.</p> <p>6. Evaluation sheets that are regularly distributed to the students and teachers at the end of each semester should be considered and taken more seriously to</p>	<p>those playing a role in the curriculum development process namely: ESP teachers, subject teachers, assessment coordinators, and program directors."</p> <p>3. Many participants indicated that they would like to be more involved with designing, or finding and developing supplementary materials.</p> <p>4. Some of the participants indicated that they want to be involved in EAP syllabus design like "Developing a contextualized curriculum which reflects the Omani culture." "I would like to participate in enhancing and polishing the syllabus in order to meet the CAS needs."</p> <p>5. Some participants expressed their wish to be involved in a process of needs analysis. "I would like to participate in structured needs analysis and implementation of sensible changes to address needs and meet defined aims."</p> <p>6. Some of the participants indicated that they want to be involved in choosing EAP textbooks that are</p>	<p>2. Encouraging EAP teachers to attend and participate in conferences, seminars, workshops that are either held internationally or locally to update their knowledge about curriculum related areas so that they can contribute to EAP curriculum development.</p> <p>3. Some teachers also suggested that peer observation and action research can be quite effective and can contribute to curriculum development.</p> <p>4. Since a large number of teachers seemed to be interested in the area of designing and developing supplementary materials, it was suggested by some participants that there should be more sessions or courses organized on materials development involving experienced teachers who have been largely involved in teaching</p>
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<p>students' needs."</p> <p>6. Lack of communication channels between EAP teachers and the curriculum development board of coordinators and decision makers.</p> <p>7. Lack of adequate EAP learning materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbooks are general and are not content-based. They don't reflect the vocabulary encountered in subject areas. Text books are culturally irrelevant to the lives of Omani students. Students find them boring as they lack effective student-centered activities. The content of these textbooks is too high for the students' level and they are not matched with the students' linguistic needs. There is so much to be covered in textbooks within each semester. Textbooks are not consistent with the existing assessment schemes in EAP courses. There is a need to "establish contextualized materials the meet the major specifications and the students' linguistic level." <p>8. Lack of students' motivation which can be related to a number of reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAP students have been used to the same assessment schemes 	<p>develop EAP courses.</p> <p>7. Providing appropriate professional development for Omani and expatriate teachers to improve their skills and update their knowledge about teaching EAP courses such as workshops, and relevant international and local conferences.</p> <p>8. Encouraging EAP teachers to do action research to highlight the problems that students have in EAP classes and to seek possible solutions.</p> <p>9. Involving experienced teachers in the review and improvement of assessment schemes implemented in EAP courses and if possible seek the help of some experts in the field of assessment to contribute to this process.</p>	<p>appropriate for the students at CAS colleges.</p> <p>7. A large number of the participants indicated that they want to be involved in the decision-making process which relates to developing the EAP curriculum.</p> <p>8. Some participants expressed their willingness to be involved in assessment evaluation and development through revising existing assessment policies and rubrics and exam criteria. "I think any discussion of curriculum development would by definition include a matching development of assessment tools and strategies, and I could see myself working with other teachers on this component."</p> <p>9. Some teachers though not many indicated that they would like to involve the students in the process of curriculum development. "I would like to listen to and record students, needs, suggestions, challenges and aspirations."</p> <p>10. Some teachers indicated that they want to do action research</p>	<p>EAP at CAS for a long time. "It would be helpful to have presentations from experienced CAS teachers giving ideas on how to make the materials more effective and manageable for students."</p> <p>5. It was also suggested by some teachers that it is quite important to formulate collaboration and communication channels with the rest of academic departments across the CAS colleges to assess the actual students' needs in order to develop the EAP curriculum.</p> <p>6. Some teachers indicated that there should be a framework of in-service training at CAS aimed at aiding the EAP teachers with the required skills that they might need to better develop the curriculum.</p> <p>7. Some participants suggested that having a research centre for EAP teachers at CAS can enable teachers to conduct research in EAP related issues either as individuals or</p>
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<p>in various EAP modules as they are required to do the same written project with no real changes in assessment specifications across the various EAP levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The topics covered in EAP textbooks are not interesting for the students. • “Students are demotivated to learn because they have many hours of EAP classes and so little to learn in relation to their majors and their academic needs.” <p>9. Challenges related to teaching staff members such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent changes in faculty. “Only if instructors teach a course for a few semesters they will get to know the drawbacks and suggest modifications.” • The need for in-service training to provide EAP teachers with the necessary knowledge to aid them in teaching EAP courses effectively. • Lack of consistency regarding the use of extra teaching materials. <p>10. Lack of required technical support in EAP courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor maintenance for multimedia labs. • The needs to be more “access and implementation of most current curricular and support materials, such as magazines, videos and on-line resources 		<p>what is aimed at solving EAP curriculum issues.</p> <p>10. Some teachers indicated that technology can also be used to develop the EAP curriculum at CAS. “I want to be able to choose books that fit the needs of the students, integrate more technology-related materials in EAP, introducing social media that is related to EAP, focus on performance rather than competence, introducing more broad objectives and focus more on validity, relevance to life, sustainability and variety.”</p>	<p>in focused teams.</p> <p>8. Some participants addressed the need for student centered teaching workshops to provide clear guidelines for all EAP teachers on the importance of this approach in EAP courses. “We have a lot of old teachers who want to teach the same way they were taught.”</p> <p>9. Providing more training sessions and workshops for teachers on how technology can best be used to enhance the delivery of the EAP curriculum. “By far, our training on Google Drive, Google Classroom has gone and can go a long way toward streamlining the research process at the College level. In my experience, the students are still just getting used to these themselves, preferring to do hard copy or paper surveys, for example, but, in time, IT can be a big help in the process.</p>
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Appendix 6: Nvivo Screenshot

HomeCreateDataAnalyzeQueryExploreLayoutViewWindowHelp

data analysis (NVivo 11)

HomeCreateDataAnalyzeQueryExploreLayoutView

Externals

Memos

NODES

Nodes

Cases

Node Matrices

CLASSIFICATIONS

COLLECTIONS

QUERIES

MAPS

OPEN ITEMS

centralized top down approach

Defining Professional dev...1315Jul 3, 2016, 4:11 AMNSSep 7, 2016, 11:55...NS

EAP Curriculum Challenges00Jul 3, 2016, 12:30...NSAug 16, 2016, 10:5...NS

centralized top down a...1651Jul 3, 2016, 12:38...NSSep 6, 2016, 10:17...NS

Course objectives are...1119Jul 3, 2016, 11:09 PMNSAug 6, 2016, 7:39...NS

centralized top down approach

SummaryReference

Internals\Interview number 15 with Hillary1 reference coded, 2.03% coverage

Reference 1: 2.03% coverage

It is top-down. Well yes it affects because we are not involved in it, you just get disengaged from what is going on. You know it is very funny, I have been here three years and everyone starts coming in and they all say the same things like the things I said, and they think did anybody pay attention to this? There is no one else noticed this and then you realize everyone else has noticed it and they have the same thoughts but they have given up, they have given up because nothing changes, and then they have just had their little thought when they first arrived, if they stay here for a length of time which most don't because of the way leadership is done, then they just give up like I have got to that stage now. You know you just give up really, you get disengaged, nobody asks you to participate, to take part in anything, for your views, for what your opinion is, so you just don't bother.

Internals\Interview number 16 with Brian1 reference coded, 1.64% coverage

Reference 1: 1.64% coverage

It seems to be top-down. Again, you would actually know more about this than I would. Out head of department kind of sets the tone for the program but I suspect that she has directions coming down from the Ministry of Higher Education. My perception is that they are also the ones who choose the curriculum for the goals. So, it seems to be very much a top-down thing. I think this kind of stops the process of curriculum development to be really honest.

Internals\Interview with Abdullah2 references coded, 6.03% coverage

NODES

Nodes

EAP Curriculum Challenges

centralized top down approach

297

Appendix 7: Official Document

<p>Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Higher Education College of Applied Sciences - Sohar</p>		<p>سلطنة عُمان وزارة التعليم العالي كلية العلوم التطبيقية بصرح صحر</p>
<p>الموافق: ٢٠١٥/٠٤/٢٥</p>	<p>الرقم:</p>	<p>التاريخ:</p>
<p>تعميم رقم (٢٠١٥/ ٦)</p>		
<p>In conjunction with cost containment instructions from the Ministry of Higher Education, the College would like to apologize for not being able to receive applications to cover expenses of staff members' participation in international conferences, until further notice.</p>	<p>بناء على توجيه المسؤولين بالوزارة، ونظرا لتوجه الوزارة نحو ترشيد الإنفاق، يرجى العلم بأن الكلية تعتذر من جميع أعضاء هيئة التدريس بالكلية عن استقبال كافة طلبات المصارفات الخارجية في المؤتمرات والندوات والتي تتطلب صرف بدلات المهمة الرسمية وتذاكر سفر وغيرها من التكاليف المقررة للمؤتمرات الخارجية وذلك لحين إشعار آخر.</p>	<p>Thanking you in advance for your continuous understanding and cooperation.</p>
<p>د. علي بن حسن اللواتي عميد الكلية Dr. Ali Hassan al-Lawati Dean</p>		<p>الدائم</p>
<p>سلطنة عُمان ، ص.ب : ١٣٥ صحر ، الرمز البريدي : ٣١١ ، هاتف : ٢٢٠٥٦٩٠٠ ، فاكس : ٢٢٠٥٧٠٠١ Sultanate of Oman, P.O. Box : 135, Sohar, Postal Code : 311, Tel : 22056900, Fax : 22057001 E-mail : dean_office.soh@cas.edu.om, www.cas.edu.om</p>		

Appendix 8: Sample of a coded interview transcript

Interviewer: Hello

Interviewee: Hello

Interviewer: How are you?

Interviewee: I am doing all right thanks.

Interviewer: Right. I would like to thank you at the beginning for accepting my invitation to be part of my research. Thank you so much.

Interviewee: You are welcome

Interviewer: Can you introduce yourself please; tell me about your educational background and your teaching experience?

Interviewee: My name is Abdullaziz. I hold a Masters degree in TESOL from California State University, Fresno Campus. I did my BA here in Oman. As to my professional working experience, I worked in a private college for years and then I went for my Masters and right after upon my return I worked for the Ministry of Higher Education here in Oman and I have been employed since 2009 until now. I switched campuses. I was in Sohar first for four years and then in summer 2013 I switched to Rustaq Campus and ever since I have been here.

Interviewer: Right. What are some of the courses that you have been teaching at the colleges?

Interviewee: Exactly I was about to mention that. Well, Prior to coming to Rustaq, I was primarily involved in foundation and post foundation but here in Rustaq I mostly teach ELT classes, so teaching students from second all the way to fifth year. I taught many linguistic courses and some technology courses and stuff like that. I have taught a variety of courses that pretty much touched on language, touched on skills, learning strategies.

Interviewer: Alright. Now the first part of the interview is focused on discussing challenging elements of EAP curriculum. The first question I have here. What does curriculum mean to you?

Interviewee: Ahh. Well. Curriculum is a broad concept. To me it goes beyond the textbook and the classroom and the students and it more represents a direction. For me it just where students want to go and how the institution is helping them to get that way or to get to that destination. So there are a lot of elements that interplay in the whole process. On one side there is instruction and the instructors and on the other end there are the learners and in between there is assessment and there is feedback, there is instruction, there are a lot of processes that interplay. So curriculum is really broad, as it is a broadest concept, it will be a plan, but then at its core components which comprise the particular textbooks, particular instructional methods, the particular assessment that you are opting for the particular institution and all of those should be aligned with the whole policies of the institution like here the case it is the Ministry of Higher Education.

Interviewer: Right. To what extent do you think EAP courses at CAS are designed to enhance the linguistic and academic needs of the student?

Interviewee: Well I taught EAP courses for like four years and a half. To an extent they are designed , well, AAh, at that particular stage students barely finish the foundation program and get to the post foundation doing the EAP classes and this is the first experience ever. On the level of exposure, they are exposed to a variety of skills the writing, the listening, generally the academic skills. It will be hard to judge if they are designed or planned well for them. For one thing we are dealing with homogenous group and they are all Omanis and they are all from the same background but it seems to work on some occasions and on some other occasions it doesn't seem to work so well. So there is a lot you know we are vague about so I can't really say much about whether it is good or not. It is just a language program eventually and some students who make a proper use of it are going to learn better, but those who don't put a lot of efforts on it they are not going to learn as much.

Interviewer: Ok. What are the aspects that you would like the EAP curriculum to focus more on? When we focus on EAP curriculum.

Interviewee: My orientation, I am not a guy who is oriented towards building knowledge and stuff. I think knowledge comes from experience and exposure. I am a guy who is oriented towards projects because I believe in the power of involving students in a particular task and that particular task will offer the scenario where the language is going to be used but beyond that students are going to have something much more sustainable and much more lasting than focusing on the knowledge. So I would really like it to be more oriented towards fostering skill base rather than knowledge base which I think somehow is of a misfortune in the way the EAP curriculum is offered coz there is more focus on knowledge rather than skills.

Interviewer: So, you feel that there is more focus on knowledge on which sorts of skills? Are you talking about a specific skill?

I am saying that because if I am judging solely based on the type of assessment that is followed. Initially before the slight shift to task based, initially it was test based and most of the students were tested on their vocab building, they were tested on their writing skills and their writing proficiency on certain themes, on certain genres, so it is more like that. Writing will be alright, we are building a skill. But then testing the students or reading a particular knowledge of the reading, this is one thing. The other thing of sense is that most of the tests are oriented towards a lower thinking skills rather than higher thinking skills so they are more of understanding, they are more of application. For example changing forms in grammar and stuff like that but they are not much involved in the higher order skills especially the ultimate one which is creation. I think creation it guarantees all the sub-scales to be integrated you know. So, well students are led, but there is more focus on the lower cognitive part rather than the higher part which will be much appreciated. Might be demanding for the students, might be hard but if learning is contextualized around tasks or around projects, I think students are going to get around it.

Interviewer: Right, Can you tell us who designs EAP courses, who decides on textbooks, course objectives and assessment procedures, and do you think EAP teachers are involved in such a process?

Interviewee: Once you join the program, apparently you just follow what is available, I am not aware, it could have been teachers' recommendations, could have been HOD were involved, but I know a lot of parties must have been involved in the whole process. But later I was involved in the decision making of suggesting different textbooks because apparently teachers were not happy about the textbooks that are being used after some years. I am not really sure if they don't fit right with the objectives and all but there is a level of dissatisfaction with these books and what they serve but apparently the change looked really hard. It was not easy because we had to look across colleges and this is not a one campus decision; we are talking about considering six campuses at the same time. So that made it harder so text books were never changed since I joined. They were only opted for a better version which is like the recent edition or so but there is no change of textbooks. The other thing is that apparently something I sensed was that the whole goals and objectives are solely driven from textbooks. They were not program driven, they are not like Ok that is what we want to do, and these are our plans and these are the working procedures to reach those plans no. To mention something specific I remember the writing for 1111 apparently before coming up with the whole plan of the EAP, there seems to be a 100% match of the textbooks with the goals. It seems that the whole goals and the objectives were solely driven from the textbooks; they are not imposed on the program on the direction of language learning coz that will require constant update but that was missing. So we have been following the same thing with that complete match with the textbook and the goals and stuff like that.

Interviewer: So, you mentioned that some teachers might be involved in some elements of the curriculum.

Interviewee: Right. Yaaah, that is the part that I missed. Well, apparently involved to a certain degree and that certain degree and that certain degree is only on the decision making, on

providing suggestions, Ok guys what do you think? But there didn't seem to be a follow up to that, we provided suggestions given certain textbooks to review and provide comments on and to see if these would be better options than the ones we are using at that time. But I remember teachers were involved in that decision making and providing feedback, they haven't received any follow-up and nothing whatsoever happened because still the same books are being used, and as I told you probably it is because this is a big decision that involves six campuses at the same time and there is a lot of money involved in the whole thing.

Interviewer: Al right. How will you describe your teaching technique in these courses, is it prescribed to you or you have the freedom to use your own technique?

Interviewee: I think there is a level of flexibility. At first as a novice teacher you definitely want to get to know the system and all but after sometime there is that flexibility, you as teacher are flexible to adapt materials as long as they don't deviate much from the prescribed goals and objectives, so there is a path but there is still some leniency as to what the choice of materials, the choice of instructional technique, not the main assessment like formative feedback. There is some flexibility you know when it comes to that but as to the major assessment framework it has to be applied across the board.

Interviewer: Can you tell us if you use supplementary materials in your EAP classes and why?

Interviewee: I use a lot actually especially for the vocab and the reading and there is also the listening and note taking, also the vocab section, I generate a lot of crosswords as I thought that would be more interesting, word hunts and stuff like that. So something to break the rhythm of what the textbooks have to offer. Most of the textbooks you know the nature of the textbooks, they are dull and boring and they are not accepted and received well not only by students but also teachers. So yeah that variety somehow helped and eased the tension there coz once you get students a little of the textbook they will be you know, there will be some space for them to do something different and I found that was appreciated.

Interviewer: So, you felt that it was effective using extra supplementary materials in your classes?

You can't avoid using them, because at some point, especially a teacher having used these textbooks, yes, there is accumulated experience but after sometime you tend to get bored. Students if they are repeating especially would definitely be bored, I mean that is not reason alone to change textbooks but at least provide variety especially differentiated instruction, we are not dealing with the same students, we are dealing with different preferences and I feel that also is not only attended to. We are not attending to learner preferences or learning styles of the students even though we know that we have different mind sets and different skill sets but we are not responding much to those. It is a one thing and it is done in the same fashion applicable across the board to all students.

Interviewer: Ok. Tell me more about the support provided for EAP teachers at CAS to enhance the delivery of the curriculum? I mean the EAP curriculum in CAS.

Interviewee: The kind of support, like the instructional support or?

Interviewer: Yeah, any kind of support provided for EAP teachers either by the Ministry, college administration, or by the English department. I would like to know more about the support or lack of support.

Interviewee: Well, I think teacher meetings will be the only thing that I remember; teachers teaching the same level would coordinate somehow usually coordinators will do the job. Sometimes I guess a level of sharing handouts, sharing the same materials doing the same level but beyond that there is no involvement from the college, like from the deanship or so or there is no involvement from the ministry you know so you be only limited to the department teachers teaching the same level not even including HOD because I think it is more like hey we are a community doing the same level, I think we can coordinate to some extent even if that is not imposed on them, it was just something voluntary. If it were imposed it would yield better results coz most of the teachers tend to work independently and that as far as I remember at some point generated some unfortunate results because that reflected in the sort of difference of tackling the same assignment. Coz at some point for example I remember teaching for example description. Many teachers like taught different types of description even if the textbook supplied for example people and places but some teachers followed that, some teachers went beyond that to describe some other things. The final exam I remember one year, I am not quite specific but once they were asked to describe something not all the teachers tackled it in the same way and that generated some sort of a problem so some teachers had to compromise somehow coz they would say hey we never taught our students that, why is it different coz the assessment coordinator is the one who is tasked with devising assessment. Other teachers are not involved in the whole process and their opinions unfortunately are not taken so it is a one person's job rather than a whole department or consultation sort of job.

Interviewer: All right, we are going to move now to the second part of the interview. This part is more focused on curriculum development; the discussion will tend to investigate more the kind of problems that are hindering curriculum development at the colleges. My question here is, in your opinion, what does the process of curriculum development involve? In other words, if we wanted to initiate curriculum development, what should we start with?

Interviewee: Alright, I think it should start with the what? What do we want and then once we are sure what we really want, we should phrase that in terms of goals like leave the textbook behind, leave everything behind just meet up, see probably you can judge based on the past experience of teaching the same level, what else can be improved, what do we want extra? And then we can move on the how, how can we do that? Alright, I am sure the how is going to generate a lot of results, these can be filtered and then eventually we need a focus on the audience like how our students are going to receive that? How our teachers are going to receive that? Eventually this is a change and we know that most people somehow resent change for some reason because most of them just grow comfortable whatever zone they have been used to. So change usually is resented so once we identify the what and the how, the what by defining the goals and then the how by

making an action plan and then considering the audience, I think incremental changes need to be introduced step by step. I don't know how that is going to work across colleges. To tell you for example of the experience here in Rustaq since Rustaq is the only college that offers the ELT program, it is easier to attempt modifications and to attempt improvements because you don't have to generalize that across colleges given the problems of communications and all. So it is easier, it is less of a hustle, works faster and we have done that actually so yeah I think these are primary considerations for me to attempt change.

Interviewer: Would you like to share your previous EAP curriculum development experiences if any?

Interviewee: EAP curriculum, not really aware of any that apart, I was the assistant coordinator for some time and then after I moved to the Rustaq campus I was appointed as a coordinator for the EAP courses. One thing I introduced moving here was, previously it mostly was minor stuff to do with materials and handouts and stuff like that, but here I did something I thought would set the pace for the coming years which was creating a collaborative platform for all teachers. It was on-line, it was a site which got all teachers on board and then because I was a coordinator, I was the decision maker so it was mandatory for them to subscribe to changes and get notified through the e-mail and this was made the only channel of updates, of communication among colleges so it somehow started as we planted the seeds of a collaborative community. So we started collaborating and working and that picked up the following semesters. Ever since we have been using those regularly and that was expanded from that particular level to all the levels and all the teachers have been doing it until now so that was something great. It could have been done better complemented with meetings and stuff. People tend to appreciate concrete changes rather than promises and talks and stuff so that I think need to be brought to the table.

Interviewer: Right, what model of leadership is currently in place at CAS, top-down or bottom-up, and do you think it affects the process of curriculum development? We are talking about EAP courses.

Interviewee: Yaah. I would say that it is top-down in the sense that most teachers follow what the coordinators say because only the coordinators get to attend meetings in Muscat at the ministry. They attend meetings, they decide with the program director and they come in share whatever updates and teachers just follow that. But still teachers have that flexibility of adapting their own materials, they are still having their own zone, I mean they can collaborate, they can do something extra given that this is not deviating from the major framework they are working on.

Interviewer: So, does it affect, the top down approach, does it affect the curriculum?

Interviewee: Ok, aah, well that depends on the kind of culture that you have in place. People here are used to in this particular culture to receiving orders from bosses and stuff. Like for example, I don't remember teachers having a meeting with the dean suggesting changes. I don't know if the

dean doesn't care or there is not the initiation from the deans to say Ok teachers we will listen to you, what problems are there in place, how can I help improve this situation, that thing never happened. So I don't know there is not that level of collaboration between the deanship and the department. I don't see it. That makes me believe somehow that top-down is more dominant coz everything is enforced from there. Teachers might work to some extent and agree together as a team but that would not go to the level of like suggesting a whole big change to like textbooks, assessment types or exams and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Right, regarding your teaching load. How many hours do you teach every week and how do you feel about your workload?

Interviewer: Back at time when I was teaching EAP regularly teachers take a load of 290 hours, that is when I started with 20 hours. That was a bit hard, there was a lot of catching up to do coz every day there will be two classes, like 4 hours a day. But upon taking coordination roles as first as assistant coordinator that low is reduced 10 hours and also the coordinators get 10 hours load but there is that hustle of keeping up with every one making sure dispatched orders or updates in a timely manner and stuff like that. The teaching load, I think it does affect, the more occupied you are, the lesser of an opportunity you have to give a lot of thought into the whole thing in improvement, or creating even materials, you would tend to get something easier just whatever teachers have so can I use it. So you rely on what is already present or what other have to share with you. So yeah that to some extent definitely affects how much you can innovate, how much you can introduce as a new thing to the course. And I also believe that the more experience you have, the more introducing change or innovating a little is not going to be that much demanding coz experience grants not only autonomy but helps you with making the right decisions.

Interviewer: Ok

Interviewee: Something else I may add is that having a lower load is not a guarantee that you are going to do some better, I think it all depends on the type of culture you have in the institution. If the institution is more of hey lets meet regularly, let's see what is wrong and let's fix it or let's attempt something different. Yeah if that culture is in place, even if you have a higher load, I think there is going to be change but if people are just listening to their superiors and carrying out orders, their expertise isn't made use of, I don't think there is going to be anything new, it is not going to have that effect.

Interviewer: Can you tell me if there is any distinction between Omanis and expat teachers with respect to asking for changes or expressing opinions related to curriculum?

Interviewee: Ok, Omani teachers have it a little more easier. I have talked to expat teachers before and some of them expressed concern that suggesting anything might not work on their favor, it might not be acceptable, it might just send a bad image of them and for some reason that might be the wrong thing to say. A lot of them have comments but unfortunately again since we don't have that sort of community where we share, where we talk. Those teachers come from different educational backgrounds; they have expertise and many contexts. I think if that is put to

use, that will help tremendously because you are not only in the one minded, one direction mindset. You are going to have a multi attitude, multi background, you know that would give a clear picture of the thing you are tackling. But a gain not many Omani local teachers would prefer changes as it is in that comfort where people grow into after some time and they are good with it and if it is less hustle, less effort, why one bother to change. I don't know.

Interviewer: Have you ever attempted to convey your feedback regarding any EAP curriculum issue at CAS and how was the reaction to it?

Interviewee: Ahh, I am not sure if I remember. I remember I had issues with some of the rubrics, like assessment rubrics and I used to fight about it, I used to argue. Some teachers will say hey you have rated that student really high. Well, that is based on the rubric coz we are all on the same page. Some local teachers would be hey he shouldn't deserve that, well yeah in reality that students doesn't deserve for example a 23 but from the rubric that I have it matches so that maybe a problem whether you are relying on experience on judging people or you are relying on a piece of paper that is in front of you.

Interviewer: I remember. Coz this is an interesting point. Some participants were actually discussing this issue and they said that they feel that as if the assessment rubrics are made to allow students pass. As if they want everybody to pass.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: So, what do you think about that?

Well, there is leniency in the rubrics, like hardly any students will be placed below 15, they are more like between the 16 and the 22, that will be the cluster. So there is more on their favor than the favor of the program. You know so that was one time when I really tried to argue for a point that was out there so if that was faulty. I mean there are a lot of things that are faulty in the whole curriculum so we should attend to that first rather than blaming me for sticking to something that I have official. Yeah, that was a time that this stand out Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me how was the reaction to your feedback? How did you feel that the reaction let's say from the HOD or the PD or whoever you attempted to convey your feedback to?

I think they resorted to that at the time of final exams marking and it was only among a team of teachers, it would not go beyond that coz we have sensed and we have lived that changes are almost hard to make and there is always that idea that yeah they are six campuses and over the course of years you know whatever suggestions that we gave, it would clash with other colleges. Like for example I remember some final exams, there was an assessment rubric for example that was used in one particular campus where all the other campuses were using something little different like an out-dated version. What happened was that that particular campus, they worked on it and they improved it but they never shared it so it seems that there is that level of autonomy within college but then across college that would be not the right way to go about it

you know, coz we never had that opportunity in other campuses. So yeah communicating changes was harder and the top-down resentment from like the PD coz they say hey we can't really change unless all the colleges change. Some colleges attempted change but never told anyone about it so it was just within college coz they have sensed that something was wrong and we need to work on it not necessarily to be communicated with others but yeah let's just do it here at least.

Interviewer: Right, Are you satisfied with your current employment contract?

Interviewee: Hahaha, in what sense, that is a broad question. I am. I don't know.

Interviewer: Some participants had some issues regarding employment contracts like expat teachers.

Interviewee: Yeah because they have two contractors, well, I think I am happy generally. Yeah. If that question was a little different, are you happy in the place you are in. I might have a different answer. A contract generally, I think it is likable yeah.

Interviewer: What do you feel about the working conditions of EAP teachers at CAS?

Interviewee: Working conditions in the sense?

Interviewer: I mean any other things not necessarily related to the curriculum, extra things like facilities provided for the teachers, the atmosphere, the offices for example whether you feel comfortable in your office, things that relate to curriculum but indirectly.

I know many teachers especially the expats; they put work as a priority like regardless of the interfering factors. But we locals tend to complain a lot for some reason coz we believe that we deserve better. There is nothing wrong about complaining. There is nothing wrong about raising our voice and getting our message across. For expats there is a concern. There are issues but I am not sure if they directly or indirectly relate as I told you I don't know if they would be the core issues or not. You are here to teach, that was your contract is regardless, you are not promised good furnishing, you are not promised a nap time, whatever but some teachers would complain about that and they would say why don't we have a nap time for example. Working conditions are generally Ok, generally good. Load might be a problem sometimes teachers are leaving or on emergency leave, this might be less favorable but generally ok.

Interviewer: Will you be willing in taking part in any future plans for EAP curriculum at CAS in addition to your teaching responsibilities?

Interviewee: In addition, might be hard. That will depend, coz the ELT courses are by nature demanding than EAP but I would love to. Being a coordinator afforded me the chance to look beyond and I have seen the change sometimes really positive just to mention irrelevant example but we have tasked with the responsibility of improving one of the courses here, educational technology. It was very traditionally oriented at first but then with the improvement, it became

more project based, more updated, more matching with the work force of the present and yeah there is better feedback. I think yeah I like that, I liked the whole experience myself, I like bringing a positive change to the institution, to the lives of students. I would not mind that, I would definitely like it yeah.

Interviewer: Right, do EAP at CAS get rewards or incentives for taking initiatives to develop the curriculum?

Interviewee: First I am not aware of any curriculum development initiatives, let alone then receiving incentive stuff, there is nothing as such, but it might be good to have something like that.

Interviewer: Would you like to be financially rewarded for developing the curriculum?

Interviewee: That might be good. That might be good. I don't think anyone will say no to that coz this is an effort that you do beside your current load. I don't think anyone will mind that. But I am not sure this will be the right incentive for everyone. Some people would say rather no, I would like something to add in my resume rather than money. Generally we are well paid and we are happy but yeah I am not sure if that will be the right thing though.

Interviewer: Right, do you feel that the general work atmosphere at CAS is conducive for EAP teachers to think of ways to improve the curriculum?

Interviewee: Not really, the current atmosphere with the top down policy. I don't think there is much that they can do. They might be some small low incremental but very limited to an extent, if there were more regular meetings, meetings for change, meetings for correction, meetings for improvement. This might be a little irrelevant but I remember we asked for ELT end of semester to give feedback but that feedback was never received sometimes is never attended to. If we have got a culture of collaboration, a culture of providing constant update aligning the goals, the goals are a little outdated, a little un-realizable and achievable. Hey, let's have something in this place, something better, something that will be much more useful not only to bringing a change to the course but even better beyond that to the lives of the students. I think that will be much more favorable but the current situation here, it is not that promising, it is more like hey have a job, do it and that is how you do it. These are the textbooks, course description, follow that and then just get around it somehow you know.

Interviewer: Yeah, I see how complicated the situation at CAS is. We will move to the next question now. Curriculum development requires continuous evaluation of various curriculum elements, what is your reflection about evaluation in curriculum? The importance of evaluation? How significant do you think evaluation is?

Interviewee: Well it all actually pores into what I was saying, there is that level of dissatisfaction that grows by the year amongst faculty and amongst students. We don't feel that in the whole program there is no that sense of fulfillment where that yeah our students are doing great, there

is not that. It is like hey they passed but then beyond passing if we actually if we out them in more contextualized sort of experience where they get to use that particular thing they studied throughout the course, it is not going to carry you know. So experiences are not transferable, they are not enduring, they are not much more effective and of value to the lives of students. It is more made of a thing about a race towards getting a better grade you know things like that. And I think somehow I missed the point.

Interviewer: It is more about evaluation. Your reflection about it.

Interviewee: Right, the course definitely needs evaluation. Any course if you offer it. EAP has been since I joined almost completed six years and a half, given that doing the same thing with the same goals, with the same objectives, come on, I mean at least our students mindset with the whole technology infusion, we are not doing much about that, we are not integrating much technology which might make it much more appealing example to them. So, and also stuff to do with the learning styles, not all students are capable of enduring a couple of hours lecturing in the class you know. I mean the same goals can be achieved but in a better scenario. But are we doing much of creating better learning scenarios, I am not really sure.

Interviewer: Right, I have one more question before we rap up this part about curriculum development. Based on your experience at the colleges, to what extent do you think teachers play a role in the process of curriculum development?

Interviewee: very limited, very limited and does not exceed passing the word to the coordinators or other teachers.

Interviewer: You are talking about the current situation in which teachers are not given that much role or much space.

Interviewee: You are talking about the role that they are going to play?

Interviewer: Yeah, I am talking about if teachers are given a role. Do you think that this role can be valuable in achieving a successful process of curriculum development?

I think if teachers have been given the chance to contribute to CD, it will be very successful. We are talking about someone who is in the field, who knows what it is like to teach. I don't want someone in an office somewhere giving me decisions and directions to do something when he is not aware of what it is like in the actual field. Teachers are in the field, teachers continuously improve and are continuously exposed to what goes on around them and I think that urge to improve and to do better, to have a positive impact on the learners. I think it is part of your teaching fulfillment you know coz we want to strive for that so I think they can create better curriculum plan in terms of goals, in terms of differentiated instruction in terms of attending to different learning needs. One of the teachers I remember. I think probably doing EAP. I am not very sure could be foundation. No, EAP was telling me that we noticed that the business students do much better than English students. You know in terms of , I don't know or probably business

and another major. So there is a tendency that teachers can make tendencies. Teachers are the right people in place, they know exactly what it takes, and they know exactly if that is going to be achievable in the field or not. So, I think they are the right people to provide judgment and any sort of change should be taken after consulting with them and after taking their feedback prior to the implementation.

Interviewer: Ok, can you tell more about us about the role that you want to play in EAP curriculum development?

Interviewee: Oh, haha, For one thing I don't wanna go to EAP, but if were given the chance, I think I would listen to teachers more, if the textbooks are not working right, if the goals are derived from the textbooks is not what we want actually in reality, I think that should not be the case. I think we should start planning together as a team, set goals that are realizable in a sense you know and look for matching materials. We can think of instruction as a team, the whole framework needs to be redesigned, and teachers should be involved at each of the stages. I am not sure if that will be really demanding, it could be but it is needed. I tend to drift a little, haha.

Interviewer: It is about the role that you want to play in curriculum development.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think I want to be involved at all the stages. I like that especially goals as I think that sets the pattern.

Interviewer: You mean more on the planning side?

Interviewee: more on the planning, more on the whole curriculum thing coz having experienced teaching ELT now, it is mainly somehow more well rounded especially seeing how students unfold their capabilities throughout the years.

Interviewer: Alright, now this is the last part of the interview about relating professional development to curriculum development at the colleges. What is your understanding of PD and do you think it is important?

Interviewee: Professional development is a culture, it is an institutional culture that we are all on board that we have a common interest and whether we succeed, we succeed together and if we fail we fail together. PD is about continuous improvement on the situation, if not improvement at least continuous reflection and feedback. We need to sit and think about it and rethink and reflect. Unless we have that we are not going to have meaningful feedback towards the end. Something constructive that is going to lead to a better change, positive change. PD is definitely crucial and I think it is there by the way. It might be not be listed or that conscious but it is there. I think we teachers on a personal level, we do that sometimes. We reflect, we did this work in this particular section, with that particular group, that particular lesson plan and it didn't work with the others. There is something wrong, I don't know where it is but at least there is that reflection. I mean being disappointed does not carry out well for us. We need to be happy every time we do something. We need to see that satisfaction from our students and we need to help them the

best way possible. So, it might not be that conscious, it might not be that articulated, written but it is there. So teachers have that awareness for going for the better and doing for the better. But if it were more formal, and actually they were initiatives to make PD more of a program, something more integrated in the system and we did that and we experienced a big intake at the beginning but that intake dropped towards the end for various reasons. But it should be part of the profession. I believe it should be integrated at least once a week there is a meeting even if it is for one hour. It should be there. It should be in place. You are not here only to teach but we want to you to know there is a big effort played and in terms of the institution, the institution wants to align for better goals once to constantly reflect in what we do, and you are the core of the matter. You are at the heart of it and you should be involved too.

Interviewer: Have you ever been involved in PD at CAS or before joining CAS, tell us about a particular experience and how effective you think it was?

Interviewee: Well, actually I organized a PD program here in CAS in Rustaq.

Interviewer: Really? That sounds interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: In Rustaq College?

Interviewee: Yeah in Rustaq.

Interviewer: Well, tell us about it.

Interviewee: well actually a priority for me was that we have a lot of expertise around but unfortunately very undervalued so the first thing I remember I did after proposing the plan to the HOD and getting the green light was that I approached all the PhD holders, just a recognition of the wealth of knowledge they possess and the expertise they hold. I approached them, I said hey, we have this particular program and plan. Pick a theme that you think is really relevant and it is going to help the rest of the team and we are going to schedule that either on a weekly basis or by weekly and we can have two simultaneous sessions. It ended up that teachers preferred to attend both meetings so that is why we had consecutive sessions rather than simultaneous. And there was variety in the topic coverage and that appealed to many rather having a one track mindset. We also had a web page done for that and we had an online feedback form after every session so we had that done also. The purpose that this feedback will be communicated with each presenter at the end of each session and would at least give us something meaningful for the coming PD sessions. The great thing was that many teachers attended the previous sessions towards the beginning of the semester almost towards the second end of the semester. Then that percentage dropped but we kept going. At least if there are three teachers willing to attend why not and that is why I mentioned earlier that this is not going to be optional plus it is going to be part of your job. We want someone who is constantly alert. We need a teacher who is constantly

on the move, constantly improving coz that reflects well with the institution and that is going to carry out well in your class room.

Interviewer: Alright, what are the PD activities that can contribute to the improvement of EAP courses at CAS? Now if we try to think of how to match sort of professional development activities with the needs of the current EAP program.

Interviewee: I think we can have specialized PD sessions like a session which is going to be for revising goals and objectives for the writing course for example. And all the teachers who are teaching that should meet together. Let's work on it. It can be followed for all the courses and specialists and experts can be there. Experts can be invited or experts from the institution. Having them focused and having them on a particular thing, I think that is going to be much more meaningful.

Interviewer: So, don't you think that we should start by solving the current problems. Basically what we need at the beginning is apart from attending workshops outside the institution or attending conferences, we need to start tackling these issues which relate to revising or deciding about the objectives. Looking at the problems in the EAP program itself. Is that what you intended?

Interviewee: Many teachers are travelling abroad to attend conferences and stuff that is great but then that is only accumulated knowledge. You come back with a wealth of knowledge. It could be there for a long time, it could disappear after a short while but the thing for a major concern for that particular teacher or the teachers who are teaching across level will be the thing they are doing. We invest a lot of time and energy. Those students' lives could at risk if we are not doing the right thing. They can easily fail the course, they could fall under probation or they could wind up with something that is not meaningful and not transferable in the real life.

Interviewer: Interesting. What suggestions would you like to give to promote PD for EAP teachers at CAS?

Interviewee: Suggestions. Ok. I think at first we need a sense of community, communication needs to be improved across the colleges probably meetings if they can come together at one place. Having an online platform to consolidate this community fostering thing coz it is going to really help. Gradual calculated steps and changes need to be taken, focused, slow. I am loss for words. Haha.

Interviewer: Right if that is it.

Interviewee: No. Probably there are some more but.

Interviewer: Just adding to what you have mentioned before. If you have more suggestions as this part is a major them is this research investigation. Would you like to elaborate on your suggestions of how PD can be improved at CAS?

Interviewee: Oh , well, Nadia, I don't know. There is a lot. I don't know what works best in particular institutions or campuses but I think this can be attempted as a differentiated means. You can try different things. Once you can have it as a long meeting, the other time you can have it as a chat or as an on-line survey and then try to differentiae the means of collecting feedback, that might be appealing to some you know. I think they are even better means out there. In the simplest means you can have a weekly podcast that can be shared and communicated with the rest of the teachers, they can be a pod cast video meetings recorded and then shared with all the other colleges, these are contextualized, these are relevant to them, these are about a specific frame of reference that all teachers conform with. Yeah more could be done. Technology can really help. Really, really help and make stuff like that available always not only for teachers but also for teachers to understand the current state, the status quo, the current state and to see what we can assess there probably to avoid them and build on those pitfalls to perfection.

Interviewer: We have reached the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your time and for you valuable interpretations and answers.

Interviewee: You are welcome.

Appendix 9: Initial Analysis

Challenges

- courses are not focused on what we want the students to do ^{with} the language.
- mixture of EAP and ESP not focused
- focus on grammar points
- students' needs, they need something specific that is relevant to what they are studying at college.
- Students don't see the usefulness of these courses because they are not addressing their needs.
- EAP curriculum based on the textbooks and the syllabus is more textbook based syllabus.
- Coordinators were involved with the EAP curriculum design.
- more communicative methodology not a kind of prescribed methodology.
- using supplementary materials is the dominant approach at EAP courses.
- Textbooks are not sufficient, so teachers use other materials.
- adopting the materials to the suitability of the students.

Curriculum Development

- new curriculum - or established curriculum.
- on-going process of developing the curriculum.
- curriculum should meet the needs of the students.
- there should be an on-going process in place to review and develop the curriculum of the English Program.
- the leadership structure at CAS isn't helping the initiatives of reviewing the curriculum suggested by EAP teachers at CAS.
- no consideration for teachers' feedback regarding the curriculum.
- centralized program across the colleges ~~which is not~~ stands against and hinders curriculum development.
- Colleges don't seem to agree on how things should be done. Each college is doing something different.
- technical issues at the college.
- misunderstanding of using the technology in the classroom.

Appendix 10: Descriptive Analysis of Questionnaire Items

Descriptive Analysis of Questionnaire Items	SD 1	D 2	N 3	A 4	SA 5	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Some elements of the EAP curriculum provided at CAS are considered to be challenging.	3.7%	14.8%	13.6%	40.7%	25.9%	3.71	1.127
2. EAP courses at CAS are designed to suit the students' linguistic and academic needs.	18.5%	33.3%	16.0%	30.9%	0.0%	2.60	1.121
3. The main purpose of EAP courses at CAS should be satisfying the linguistic demands of major departments.	3.7%	7.4%	16.0%	51.9%	19.8%	3.78	.981
4. A learner-centered approach should be the guiding educational principal for EAP courses at CAS.	1.2%	3.7%	13.6%	48.1%	32.1%	4.08	.854
5. EAP courses at CAS should be informed by a needs analysis process.	1.2%	0.0%	12.3%	39.5%	45.7%	4.30	.786
6. Learning resources such as textbooks, audio and visual resources are sufficient to enhance the students' academic proficiency.	22.2%	33.3%	18.5%	17.3%	7.4%	2.54	1.232
7. EAP teachers are involved in the revision and evaluation of existing course outlines.	35.85	32.1%	22.2%	4.9%	3.7%	2.08	1.065
8. EAP teachers are encouraged to develop supplementary materials for EAP courses.	1.2%	14.8%	17.3%	42.0%	23.5%	3.72	1.031
9. Supplementary materials designed by teachers are being evaluated and incorporated into the EAP courses.	22.2%	29.6%	29.6%	13.6%	3.7%	2.46	1.102
10. EAP teachers are involved in the process of writing exams.	38.3%	22.2%	23.5	13.6%	1.2%	2.16	1.130

11. I think that English Departments at CAS colleges have a clear plan for EAP curriculum development.	23.5%	33.3%	25.9%	16.0%	0.0%	2.35	1.020
12. The main task for EAP teachers in CAS colleges is the implementation of the existing curriculum.	2.5%	8.6%	16.0%	59.3%	12.3%	3.71	.889
13. Teachers' views and comments about areas of improvement in EAP courses are being considered by HODs and the program director.	21.0%	22.2%	37.0%	14.8%	3.7%	2.57	1.100
14. EAP teachers in CAS colleges are encouraged to develop various curriculum elements.	12.3%	33.3%	29.6%	21.0%	2.5%	2.67	1.028
15. Curriculum development requires systematic evaluation of various curriculum elements.	3.7%	3.7%	7.4%	43.2%	40.7%	4.15	.982
16. EAP teachers in CAS colleges have enough time to do research and participate in conferences.	22.2%	35.8%	18.5%	17.3%	4.9%	2.46	1.169
17. EAP teachers should be encouraged to work in collaborative teams to solve various curriculum elements.	4.9%	2.5%	11.1%	51.9%	28.4%	3.98	.981
18. EAP teachers have the necessary knowledge to contribute to curriculum development.	7.4%	9.9%	32.1%	37.0%	12.3%	3.38%	1.072
19. I have had CAS provided pre-service training in EAP when I first started teaching at CAS colleges.	44.4%	33.3%	11.1%	7.4%	2.5%	1.89	1.043
20. EAP teachers undergo in-service training programs and workshops at CAS colleges.	22.2%	25.9%	18.5%	24.7%	7.4%	2.69	1.279
21. Providing professional development opportunities for teachers can contribute to EAP curriculum development.	2.5%	7.4%	7.4%	43.2%	38.3%	4.09	.996
22. Experienced teachers should be placed at the center of EAP curriculum development.	2.5%	3.7%	21.0%	40.7%	30.9%	3.95	.953
23. Professional development opportunities are being fairly distributed among Omani and expatriate EAP teachers.	24.7%	19.8%	30.9%	21.0%	2.5%	2.56	1.157
24. Attending relevant conferences and workshops provide a great opportunity for EAP teachers to update their knowledge and exchange their teaching experiences.	2.5%	3.7%	8.6%	48.1%	35.8%	4.13	.905

25. EAP teachers can make a valuable contribution in the context of EAP curriculum development.	2.5%	2.5%	8.6%	46.9%	38.3%	4.18	.883
26. I think that EAP teachers can minimize curriculum issues through their participation in action research.	3.7%	2.5%	22.2%	50.6%	19.8%	3.81	.915
27. I think that curriculum challenges can be solved by establishing collaborative teams of EAP teachers across the colleges.	2.5%	9.9%	23.5%	44.4%	18.5%	3.67	.978
28. I think professional development plans at CAS colleges should account for EAP teachers' training needs.	1.2%	4.9%	8.6%	49.4%	34.6%	4.13	.862
29. I think that English departments at CAS colleges need to discuss openly issues of curriculum development with EAP teachers.	3.7%	1.2%	4.9%	44.4%	44.4%	4.26	.910
30. I like to be involved in the decisions that relate to EAP curriculum development at CAS colleges.	3.7%	4.9%	19.8%	42.0%	28.4%	3.88	1.011

Appendix 11: Sample of a Piloted Questionnaire

Teacher Attitude Questionnaire

Dear Participant:

This questionnaire is designed to infer your perceptions about EAP curriculum aspects that are considered to be challenging in Colleges of Applied Sciences and to explore your views on teachers' roles in the process of curriculum development in the context of the current research. Your cooperation is much appreciated.

Part A: Personal Information

Nationality **Omani**

Years of teaching experience **4**

Qualification:

- BA in English language teaching
- MA in English language teaching
- PhD in English language teaching
- Degree in a relevant subject taught and assessed in English
- Other

Teaching Experiences:

- How long have you been teaching English? 4
- How long have you been teaching EAP at CAS? 3
- Do you have any background or training in EAP? Not specifically in EAP

Part B: (the close-ended statements/Alternative-answer questions)

Please answer the following questions with **Yes** or **No**.

1. Do you think that there are a number of curriculum challenges that influence EAP courses at the colleges?

Yes

No

2. Do you think that EAP Textbooks and teaching materials are sufficient in enhancing students' academic proficiency?

Yes

No

3. The implemented EAP curriculum accounts for the students' academic needs and prepares them for their academic studies.

Yes

No

4. Do you have a continuous process of curriculum development at CAS?

Yes

No

5. Do you think that curriculum development for EAP courses is important?

Yes

No

6. Do you undergo pre-service training before you start teaching at CAS?

Yes

No

7. Do you have in-service training for EAP teachers at CAS?

Yes

No

8. Do you think providing professional development for EAP can help solve curriculum issues?

Yes

No

9. Do you think that the learner-centeredness should be the guiding educational principle for EAP courses at CAS?

Yes

No

10. Do you think that the general purpose of EAP courses at CAS should focus on satisfying the demands of content areas?

Yes

No

Part C: (the close-ended statements/ Likert-Scale questions)

Please read the following statements carefully and select the answer that best represents your opinion.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. There are a number of challenges that hinder the effectiveness of EAP courses at CAS.				☺	
2. EAP courses at CAS are carefully designed to suit the students' linguistic and academic needs.				☺	
3. EAP courses at CAS have been established according to a needs analysis process.			☺ I have no idea		
4. Teachers have enough time to do research and participate in conferences.				☺	
5. Learning resources such as textbooks and supplementary materials are appropriate to enhance the students' academic proficiency.				☺	
6. EAP teachers are involved in the revision and evaluation of existing course outlines systematically.					☺
7. EAP teachers are involved in designing course materials and exam writing.					

8. CAS colleges have a clear plan for EAP curriculum development.					😊
9. The main task of teachers is to implement curricula as received by course administrators.				😊	
10. EAP teachers have the necessary knowledge to contribute to curriculum development.			😊		
11. Providing professional development opportunities for teachers can contribute to EAP curriculum development.		😊			
12. Teachers should be placed at the centre of EAP curriculum development.		😊			
13. Professional development activities are being fairly distributed among Omani and expatriate EAP teachers.				😊	
14. Attending relevant conferences and workshops provide a great opportunity for EAP teachers to update their knowledge and exchange their teaching experiences.		😊			
15. Teachers' views and comments about areas of improvement in EAP courses are considered valuable by course administrators.					
16. EAP teachers are encouraged to develop various curriculum elements.		😊			
18. Curriculum development requires systematic evaluation of various curriculum elements.	😊				
19. EAP teachers are believed to have a valuable contribution in the context of EAP curriculum development.					

20. EAP Professional development plans should accounts for teachers' needs in light of the problematic aspects of the implemented EAP curriculum.	😊				
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Part D: (open-ended questions)

Please provide your answers to the following questions:

1. What do you think are the most challenging aspects of EAP curriculum at the colleges?

- The mismatch between the linguistic level of the textbooks and the levels of the students.
- The fact that they are not context-specific or not even having international themes. I wonder how much 'Celebrating Thanks Giving Day' is relevant to student's context. I think it complicates the task when both the context and the means of delivery are new.
- Not all teachers are qualified.
- Centralization of the system that doesn't allow for the slightest freedom in addressing challenges.
- Not bearing into account the fact those different students could have different needs.

2. How do you think the process of curriculum development could best be achieved at CAS?
 - Through following the proper curriculum development process and bearing into mind that this doesn't only mean textbooks but many other aspects that all need to be examined and addressed.

3. What is the role that you want to play in the process of EAP curriculum development?
- The least I could aspire for is to be asked about my opinion being a practitioner in the field. I would like after that to join a team that is guided by an expert in curriculum development to tackle a process of local curriculum development that is based on our students' needs and the other departments' expectations.
4. In your opinion, what are the most important professional development activities that can contribute to the improvement of EAP courses at CAS?
- Methods of teaching
 - Methods of assessment
 - Teaching media
 - Needs assessment
 - Courses on content adaptation and customisation
 -

Appendix 12: A Sample of a Piloted Interview Schedule

Background Information

1. Would you please introduce yourself? Tells us about your educational background and your teaching experience?
2. Have you been introduced to curriculum during your pre-service education?
3. What does curriculum mean to you?

Challenging Elements in EAP curriculum

4. Can you tell me about EAP courses at CAS? How many modules are there? How many hours allocated for these courses? What is the current focus of these courses?
5. Do you think that these courses in their current format prepare students for their future majors? To what extent do you think students' needs are met?
6. What aspects you would like the curriculum to focus more on? (This is another question)
7. Tell us about who designs EAP courses? Who decides on the textbooks, course objectives, and assessment procedures?
8. Are EAP teachers involved in this process? (This is about teacher's role)
9. How will you describe your teaching technique in these courses? Is it prescribed to you or you have the freedom to use your own teaching style? Do you find it effective?
10. How do you think EAP teachers can best develop their teaching styles? ? (This is another question)
11. Do you design or use supplementary materials in your EAP classes and Why? What sort of materials have you designed? How effective do you find them?
12. Tell us more about the support provided for EAP teachers in terms of required orientation, facilities, and teaching resources?
13. What kind of support you would like to have as an EAP teacher at CAS? (This is another question)

What kind of challenges do you encounter regarding the curriculum at CAS? (you can add this)

Curriculum Development at CAS

14. In your opinion, what does the process of curriculum development involve?
15. Have you ever been involved in curriculum development before? Tell us more about your past experiences in this regard? (This is another question)
16. What model of leadership is currently in place? Top-down or bottom-up? Do you think it affects the process of curriculum development?
17. Regarding your teaching load, how many hours do you teach every week? How do you feel about your workload? Do you have enough time to think of ways to develop the curriculum?
18. Can you tell us if there is any distinction between Expat teachers and Omani teachers with respect to asking for changes or expressing opinions related to curricular issues?
19. Have you ever attempted to convey your feedback regarding any curriculum issue at CAS? Tell us about it? (This is another question)
20. Are you satisfied with your current employment contracts? What do you feel about the working conditions of EAP teachers at CAS?
21. Will you be willing in taking part in any future plans of EAP curriculum development at CAS in addition to your teaching responsibilities? (This is another question, this is about teacher's role?)
22. Do EAP teachers at CAS get rewards or incentives for taking initiatives to develop the curriculum? Would you like to be financially rewarded for developing the curriculum?
23. Do you feel that the general work atmosphere at CAS is conducive for EAP teachers to think of ways to improve the current EAP curriculum? (I like this question)
24. Curriculum development requires continuous evaluation of various curriculum elements, why? How do you think evaluation can best be implemented in these courses? Students' evaluation, Teacher evaluation, curriculum evaluation?
25. Based on your experience, to what extent do you think teachers play a role in the process of curriculum development? Tell us about the role that you want to play in EAP curriculum

development? What else would you like to do with respect to EAP curriculum development at CAS?

Relating Professional Development to Curriculum development at CAS

26. What is your understanding of professional development? Do you think it is important and why?
27. Have you ever been involved in professional development at CAS or before joining CAS? Tell us about it? How effective was the experience?
28. What are the professional development activities that can contribute to the improvement of EAP courses at CAS?
29. What suggestions would you like to give to promote professional development for EAP teachers at CAS?